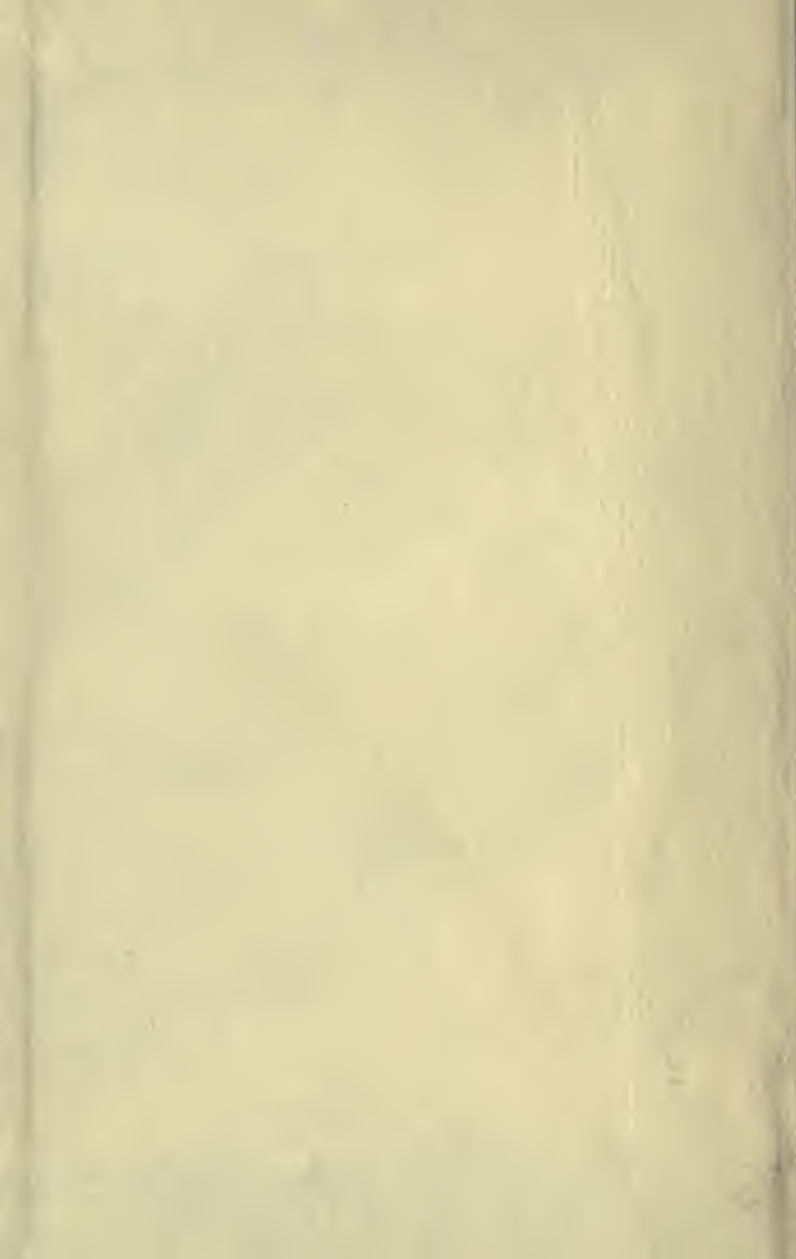

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THE LIFE, TIMES, AND LABOURS

OF

ROBERT OWEN.

EDINBURGH
CO-OPERATIVE PRINTING COMPANY LIMITED,
BRISTO PLACE.

Robert Owen

12 October 1847

To Lloyd Jones

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THE

LIFE, TIMES, AND LABOURS

OF

ROBERT OWEN

BY

LLOYD JONES

EDITED BY WILLIAM CAIRNS JONES

WITH TWO PORTRAITS AND A FAC-SIMILE

VOL. I.

LONDON
SWAN SONNENSCHEIN AND CO.
PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1890

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DEDICATED

TO

EDWARD VANSITTART NEALE, Esq.,

IN TOKEN OF THE

ESTEEM IN WHICH HE WAS HELD BY THE AUTHOR.

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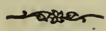
Biographical Sketch of the Author.



WHEN the republication of "The Life, Times, and Labours of Robert Owen" was decided upon, it was suggested that if I were to write a short notice of my father, to be prefixed to the work, it might impart to it a slight additional interest, in the eyes of some of its readers in the co-operative movement. I received, at the same time, concerning the character of what I should write, one or two suggestions, of which I have availed myself.

Though the following sketch is not intended to be in any sense biographical, I may state that my father was, as his name implies, of Welsh extraction, being the descendant of a Glamorganshire family. During the Revolution of 1688, an ancestor of his, one Morgan Jones, served under William of Orange as an officer of cavalry, and, after the Battle of the Boyne, settled in Ireland as a stock farmer. In 1798 my grandfather, who was at the time a youth living in Dublin, took part in the insurrection. On the capture of

Lord Edward Fitzgerald, he made his escape to the Wicklow Hills, where a number of the insurgents, gathering head, fought a skirmish with a body of troops by whom they were defeated ; when my grandfather, travelling by night and hiding during the day, made his way farther south. Ultimately he became a small employer of labour, in the fustian-cutting trade, in Bandon, where he married, and where my father was born in the year 1811.

Subsequent to the insurrection, and after settling in Bandon, my grandfather turned Roman Catholic. This was, I believe, to a considerable extent, due to the fact that, living in the midst of an English Protestant settlement where religious prejudice was, even for that period, unusually strong, he witnessed much that revolted his sense of justice on the one hand and excited his sympathy on the other. In any case, it would appear that, to the last, he remained a steadfast convert to Roman Catholicism. But, though in many people belief, of whatever nature, is the result of early training and association, I imagine that my father must, while very young, have developed tendencies which were unfavourable to an acceptance of many things involved in an adherence to the faith in which he had been educated. I should suppose, moreover that, my grandfather had none of the narrowness which commonly belongs to converts from one religious faith to another. I take him to have been a very liberal-minded man of good information and reading, as I have heard my father mention that he himself was familiar with the names of many celebrated authors while he was still a child, and long before he read their works. This may have helped to

impart to him that great fondness for books which, as was well known to those who were intimate with him, was one of his chief characteristics.

My father's knowledge of literature was extensive and varied. To many who had intercourse with him, his reading might have appeared to be more or less confined to subjects an acquaintance with which was essential to the part he took as an advocate of political and social reform. But, though he had not the same opportunity of utilising it as he had of utilising information acquired through a study of political, social, and economic questions, perhaps the most remarkable thing in connection with his reading was his knowledge of English poetry, from the earliest writers down to those of the present day. In this branch of literature, his reading had, over a long series of years, been very extensive, insomuch that there was hardly a poet belonging to any period of our history with whom he was unacquainted. His memory was excellent, and it was astonishing with what readiness he would recall passages from some of the oldest and most obscure of our minor poets, even though he might not have looked into their pages for years. I think that few readers excelled him in taste. His judgment was discriminating, and he was not easily betrayed into exaggerated praise, though he had a ready eye and a keen appreciation for beauty of thought and expression. In especial, whatever urged an exalted conception of human duty, or commemorated any example of self-sacrifice, in terms appropriate to the inspirations of genius, never failed to have a powerful effect upon him. I may mention, as a characteristic fact, that one of the last poems he

requested to have read to him was Mrs Browning's "Mother and Poet."

His disposition was sanguine. The vicissitudes and mischances from which his life was seldom free, would have been sufficient to depress, or even to render discontented and morose, many men of different temperament; but, in the presence of misfortune, he seldom failed to maintain a cheerfulness and a hopefulness which very few would have been likely to possess in similar circumstances. This disposition not only supported him in the midst of personal calamity, but also enabled him to carry into the efforts with which his public life was associated an eager enthusiasm and confidence in the success of the principles he advocated; though he was not one who had any faith in the "barren optimistic sophistries of comfortable moles."

Notwithstanding his antipathies were sometimes strong, he was by nature unsuspicious and trusting to an extent which, as I think, more than once led to his being too readily deceived in the characters and motives of those with whom he had intercourse. In the absence of some very convincing proof of insincerity, he was apt to place unreserved confidence in the professions of those who were interested in whatever cause he had most at heart; and, though he would sometimes express, in unmistakable terms, disapprobation of the proceedings of men with whom he was brought into contact, anything approaching to a steady and rooted distrust, even in cases where many might have considered such a feeling prudent and justifiable, was almost impossible to him. I have often thought that in judging of men, he was, as a

rule, disposed to make insufficient allowance for the vanity and self-interest by which their conduct was likely to be influenced. But even had he, in this respect, been more incredulous than he was, it could not have destroyed his belief in the accomplishment of some good purpose, in the midst of all that could tend to discourage such a belief. In consequence of an unfortunate inability on my own part to altogether share this hope, I had the more frequent opportunity of hearing him repudiate the opposite view. I have spoken of his love for the poets. One of his chief favourites, among those of the present century, was Wordsworth ; and I think this preference was due to Wordsworth's never-failing recognition of the theory that human nature cannot be so degraded but that there exists in every heart the capability of responding to a true and earnest appeal. It was this poet's thorough belief in humanity which attracted him beyond every other quality, for it was with this he most deeply sympathised.

In dealing with the questions in which he took a leading interest, he rarely failed to make allowance for all those circumstances which, in different classes of men, tend to create a divergency in regard to the formation of opinions. If an occasional impatience were visible in his manner, it was due to the earnestness of his character rather than to any want of consideration for the opinions of others, even when these were most at variance with his own. I think I am justified in saying that seldom was his warmest denunciation of principles of which he disapproved, made on the assumption that they were not conscientiously maintained by those whom he sought to con-

fute. He was very slow to attribute unworthy motives to his opponents, and if during his early life, he attacked certain men or classes of men, it was, to judge from all I have heard and read concerning those times, in circumstances of extreme provocation, and in retaliation upon an unscrupulous intolerance which never hesitated to unjustly attack the characters and motives of himself and his associates. Taking into consideration, however, the fact that his name was so often identified with the warfare of important and conflicting interests, the greater part of his career was especially free from misrepresentation ; and it is no more than just to say that it was also free from whatever could have furnished an excuse for calling into question the motives from which he acted. Whenever he was called upon to do so, as happened more than once, he never hesitated to make an upright choice between his own personal advantage and an adherence to principle.

When he decided, during the election of 1886, to become a candidate for Parliament, I undertook to urge upon him the fact that he was about to engage in a contest in connection with which it was a generally accepted theory that men of average conscientiousness in the ordinary affairs of life, might, without censure, avail themselves of the most contemptible methods of securing the triumph of their own faction —that he was about to strive for a victory which was difficult of achievement, and, if gained, not worth having. But he had taken part as an earnest politician in most of the political movements of his time without injury to his own sincerity, and he declined to regard otherwise than as an honour, the privilege of representing a large body of his fellow-countrymen in the

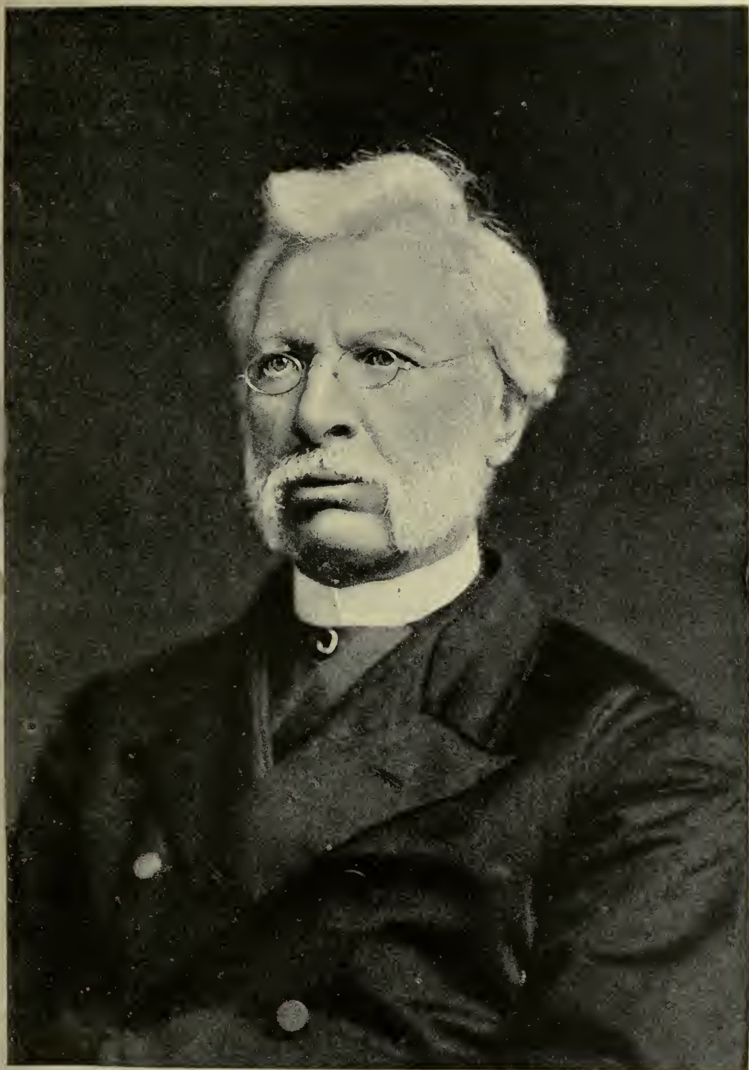
House of Commons. He was, moreover, persuaded that as a member of Parliament he would have a more effective opportunity of advocating the cause of those in whose behalf he had laboured for so many years, and on such a point it was impossible to question the justice of his being entirely guided by his own experience and judgment. At the same time, it is undeniable that, while acknowledging that a too positive assertion of the right of independent thought and action might become both inconvenient and injurious, he was a "party man" only in a sense in which the interests of party are understood to be subordinate to the interests of the nation, and their success consistent with an honourable self-respect on the part of those who seek to secure it.

My father never estimated the possibilities of any cause in which he was interested, by the measure of success which attended his own efforts. Had he been destined to recover from the illness which occasioned his death, there is no reason to doubt that during the years which might have remained to him, he would, in spite of failure and disappointment, have exhibited the same hopefulness and, so long as he retained his health and strength, the same energy that had marked the years through which he had already passed. Once, in reply to an observation I made to him, he read aloud the following passage from the "Sayings of George Eliot," the pages of which he happened to be turning over at the moment:—"The only failure a man ought to fear, is failure in cleaving to the purpose he sees to be best. As to just the amount of result he may see from his particular work—that's a tremendous uncertainty; the universe has not been arranged for

the gratification of his feelings. So long as a man sees and believes in some great good, he'll prefer working towards that in the way he's best fit for, come what may."

These words indicate the principle by which he was guided through long years of labour and trial, and to which he remained constant to the end.

WILLIAM CAIRNS JONES.



LLOYD JONES.

1311—1886.

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THE LIFE, TIMES, AND LABOURS

OF

ROBERT OWEN.

Prefatory.

In commencing this memoir, I feel how inadequately any mere narrative of the everyday events of such a life, would bring into view the importance of the work in which from early manhood Robert Owen had been engaged. Had he been a statesman or a soldier, a literary man or a mere diner-out, much of his life would have been spent amongst men whose position, acts, or sayings would have given interest to him; and much of the pleasure and profit to be derived from a perusal of his biography, would be due to the public events in which he had taken a part, and in what he had been able to relate concerning the public men with whom he had been associated. Books of biography, constructed on the principle here indicated, are both instructive and amusing. Our interest in the past arises to a great extent out of what we know of those who have played an important part in it; but, away from the beaten paths of the world, there are fields of action which may be laboured in with great profit to those who need the sympathy and help of their fellows, and there are men who, unattracted by the honour or the profit of success, enter these fields and

labour in them ; receiving frequently, as their reward, the censure of those on whose behalf they have been struggling, and the losses that always attend efforts made in resisting wrong, or in overcoming errors supported by authority, prejudice, and self-interest.

Robert Owen entered, at an early age, the field in which he laboured during a long life, never for a moment turning aside from the pursuit of the object for which he had decided to struggle. He accepted cheerfully labour and loss, censure and disappointment. Derision and scoffing came to him, but never produced in him despondence or despair. He had lived amongst the people, and knew what they suffered through ignorance and poverty ; and he took on himself, as the chief duty of his life, to war against these, whatever he might suffer in the conflict. The interest of such a life lies in its practical wisdom and its faithfulness to principle, not in the completeness of its success. The highest to be hoped by the wisest and ablest who engage in such a work, is that practicable openings may be made by which future success shall be reached by others.

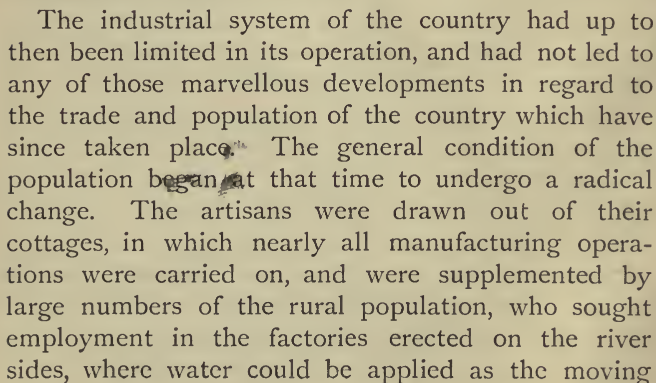
In this narrative attention will be given especially to a description of the state of things that existed in Great Britain during Owen's lifetime. The social and industrial condition of the masses of the people will be described, so that the character of the work in which he engaged may be the more distinctly understood. I have endeavoured to describe the plans devised by him for helping forward his proposed reforms, the measure of success he met with, and the position in which things stood when his long labours were brought to a close.

Between the date of his birth and that of his death, there took place a greater number of important developments in mechanical discovery and applied science, in connection with the business of the country, than had taken place within the same space of time at any other period of the world's history. The conditions of labour became entirely changed, and during his most active period as a manufacturer and reformer, the changes were producing results of a most undesirable kind. There was a rapid and extensive displacement of human labour by mechanical labour, and the people so displaced had neither time nor opportunity to fit themselves to the industries brought into existence by the new applications of mechanical science. Hence there was deep poverty and severe suffering amongst the working portion of the population, who, in their inability to understand the new position, became irritated. The increase of the productive capacity of the country brought to them chiefly an increase of suffering. For many years the changes made in the situation of the working people were changes for the worse, and they could not see any satisfactory explanation, nor could they hope for any improvement.

In making comparisons between the England of the past and the England of the present, the power of creating wealth in the past as compared with the present should be carefully considered; also the relative proportions of the accumulated wealth of the country possessed by the different classes of the community, and the prevailing content or discontent of the people in regard to its apportionment. The danger in connection with this, and how to avoid it,

has been a sore trouble to some of the wisest heads; and this was the question which presented itself to Robert Owen's mind, from the moment he took his place amongst those who were then busy in developing and directing the new productive power which was rapidly coming into existence,—how to regulate its use, how to arrange for an equitable distribution of its results, how to employ the masses of the people in connection with it, that they might find in its increase an improvement of their condition, and by this a growth of wealth and an expansion of power in the nation.

Beyond these considerations there were others that actively occupied his thoughts in regard to the education of the people, with a view to a higher life in connection with their daily labours,—an increase of knowledge, a love of truth, a kindlier intercourse, a wiser tolerance of every form of difference in thought. This was the work on which Robert Owen employed the labours of his life, and few of those acquainted with the work he did will doubt that a large measure of success has been obtained.



The industrial system of the country had up to then been limited in its operation, and had not led to any of those marvellous developments in regard to the trade and population of the country which have since taken place. The general condition of the population began at that time to undergo a radical change. The artisans were drawn out of their cottages, in which nearly all manufacturing operations were carried on, and were supplemented by large numbers of the rural population, who sought employment in the factories erected on the river sides, where water could be applied as the moving

power to the vast mechanical forces which were coming into use. Except in the fields, and in those smaller household industries to which the new inventions did not apply, a complete change took place in the relation of employer and employed, and in the habits of both. The largeness of the employers' undertakings, and the great increase in the numbers employed, rendered personal supervision next to impossible; whilst the rapidly increasing wealth of the factory owners, and their consequent change of habit, gradually separated the two classes from each other, not only in sympathy but in interest, as mere payers and receivers of wages. The domestic relations, that were a necessary condition of life in the old system of household industry, were rendered less intimate. The loom and the spinning-wheel, together with the cultivation of a certain portion of the land, had been the occupations of the family. The father and sons attended to the land when, as weavers, they had distanced the mother and daughter as spinners; parental superintendence, therefore, was constant, and parental teaching and example were felt. These, to a great extent, ceased when the workers, particularly the young, were drawn from their homes into the factories. When, in addition, it is remembered that over the whole of this initiatory period the principal inconvenience felt by the employers was want of workers, or "hands," it will not be wondered at if, in the absence of home influences, the evil effects of a bad companionship on the minds and habits of factory children began at an early period to be apparent.

It was at the commencement of this new system of industrial life that Robert Owen was born. During its

early development he had to decide how he should act as an employer in reference to it. The system itself and its consequences, actual and probable, came to thousands of others, as they came to him. These had to make their choice, as he made his; and it is because he stood aside from the great body of the employers of the country, not acting for himself alone, but thinking and acting for those who were rapidly becoming the victims of the new industrial system, that his thoughts, his plans, and his labours should be interesting to the present generation. Just now the great industrial struggle, which may be said to have commenced with him, is proceeding with vigour; but now the combat is in the hands of the masses of the working people, who were at that time totally unable to help themselves, but who had in him a true champion. There were other good and true men even at the beginning, of whose labours I shall have to speak; but none of them comprehended the magnitude of the growing danger, nor did any of them attempt, as did Owen, to grapple with it in all its forms and ramifications, physical, moral, and industrial,—not by exposure and denunciation alone, but by forethought, business arrangement, and by calm constructive work.

Some short time previous to his death, Robert Owen wrote and published what he called "Recollections of My Life." These "Recollections" are what they profess to be, and make no pretensions to fulness of detail, to strict accuracy in sequence, or to order in the importance of the events comprised in a long and active life extending over eighty years. He seems not to have noted the scenes and circumstances of his

daily life, or to have kept a record of his dealings with the world, while actively pursuing his duties as a large manufacturer and as an earnest reformer.

It may be said of him, however, that his memory was always clear, and his judgment on matters of business singularly sound. Up to the latest period of his life, he talked of past occurrences, however remote, with clearness and readiness, so that all he states in his "Recollections" may be relied on for its closeness to fact. When it is considered, moreover, that all he said and did was influenced by candour and love of truth, whether in dealing with friends or opponents, it may be taken for granted that what is inserted here from his brief autobiography, is above suspicion so far as concerns fairness of statement and honesty of spirit.

CHAPTER I.

Birth and Boyhood.

ROBERT OWEN was born at Newtown, Montgomeryshire, on the 14th May 1771, and was the youngest but one of seven children. His father, a native of Welshpool, had been brought up to the saddlery business. His mother, whose maiden name was Williams, was the daughter of a farmer in the neighbourhood of Newtown, which was then a neat, clean, beautifully-situated country town.

Judging from all we can learn of him, at this early period, Robert Owen was an active, cheerful, and intelligent boy. His school time was necessarily short, but he was fond of learning, assiduous in his attend-

ance, quick at his lessons, and he acquired at a very early age a taste for reading. In a country village people of all ages and conditions are known to each other. The desire in young Owen for books became known to the clergyman, the physician, and the lawyer of the place, who permitted him to borrow any book they possessed. In this way he read "Robinson Crusoe," "Philip Quarles," "Pilgrim's Progress," Harvey's "Meditations among the Tombs," and Young's "Night Thoughts," as well as Richardson's novels, and other stories.

While still very young he was, in accordance with a neighbourly arrangement, allowed to serve in the shop of a tradesman of the town. This, however, was but temporary, as it had been settled that when he attained the age of ten he should go to London, his eldest brother having settled there as a saddler at No. 81 High Holborn.

This was an early age at which to face the world, and a difficulty, the extent of which cannot be easily appreciated in the present day, lay in the very front of his undertaking, namely, the distance between Newtown and London. Those who can realise the discomfort and inconvenience of a long journey by coach in the old days, will be able to understand what anxiety this must have caused his parents. But in such cases, to those who are not blessed with affluence, submission to painful and hazardous separations becomes a necessity. He himself faced the matter cheerfully. He had forty shillings over and above his expenses, and felt, in the possession of this sum, fit to cope with and overcome all the difficulties that lay before him. The London coach started from Shrewsbury, at which

place he commenced his journey at night. Perched on the roof, he was whirled through the darkness in the direction of the metropolis, little dreaming of the remarkable future that lay before him. The proprietor of the coach was disposed to give the young traveller an inside place, but a voice from the interior of the conveyance protested against the intrusion of an outside passenger, so he had to be contented with a cold and sleepless journey in the night air on the outside. "It was dark," he remarks, "and I could not see the objector, nor discover how crowded the coach might be; coaches then carried six inside. I was glad afterwards I did not know who this man was, and therefore I could not be angry with him, as I should have been, for refusing admission to a child."

On his arrival he was welcomed by his brother and his sister-in-law, but having procured, through the interest of some friends, a situation with Mr James M'Guffog, who carried on a large drapery business at Stamford in Lincolnshire, he left London within six weeks. The conditions of his engagement with M'Guffog were, that he should serve the first year for nothing, the second for a salary of eight pounds, and the third for an advance to ten pounds.

Owen speaks of M'Guffog as of a man possessed of many excellent qualities. He was honest, methodical, and liberal in his conduct. His business was respectable and large, the house orderly and comfortable. He had originally been a Scotch pedlar, and had commenced life with a few shillings and a basket, which in a little time he changed for a pack; ultimately becoming a large and comparatively a rich trader, respected and trusted by all who knew him.

A man of good principles, traversing the lonely places of the land, would, with a mind predisposed toward such reflections, find, like Wordsworth's traveller, time for serious and elevating thought, when, the petty cares of trade for the time forgotten, he saw, at the close of his day's tramping,

> "The hills
> Grow larger in the darkness; all alone
> Beheld the stars come out above his head."

Mr M'Guffog was apparently a man to feel the influence of such scenes. He had read and studied in addition to punctually attending to his business. He was evidently qualified to win the respect of those with whom he had intercourse, and Owen speaks of the confidence he gained from his equals and from his poorer neighbours. Many of his customers "were among the highest nobility in the kingdom, and often six or seven carriages belonging to them were at the same time in attendance at the premises. His shop was, in fact, a kind of town rendezvous for the nobility and principal gentry of the neighbourhood when they visited the town."

In this position Owen acquired much experience, which he accounted of great value when he in after-life became a manufacturer and commercial man on a large scale. What, however, was perhaps of most service to him as a youth of active and inquiring mind, was the well-selected library in his employer's house, to which he had unrestricted access. The hours during which he was most busily engaged were from ten in the morning to four in the afternoon. During the rest of the day his time was pretty much at his own disposal, so that he read about five hours

daily, during the three years he remained at Stamford. His habit of early rising, which never left him during any period of his long life, was of great advantage to him in this respect. One of the entrances of Burleigh Park stood near the town, and in summer his chief pleasure was to go into the park to walk, read, think, and study, among its noble avenues. "Very often," he says, "I was in the park from between three and four in the morning until eight, and then again in the evening from six or seven to nearly dark. I had transcribed many of Seneca's moral precepts into a book, which I carried in my pocket, and to ponder over these in the park was one of my pleasurable occupations. In this park, which I made my study, I read many volumes of the most useful works I could obtain. At the early hour mentioned the only person I used to see taking his first walk for the day was the Earl of Exeter, the uncle, I believe, of his successor who married the miller's daughter, the subject of Tennyson's exquisite poem, and who was the father of the present marquis."* "I often recur," he adds, "to the recollection of the many happy healthy hours I enjoyed in that park, healthy both in body and mind. Frequently in the morning I hailed the rising sun, and in the evening watched its setting and the rising of the moon."

There is some uncertainty as to whether Robert Owen stayed three or four years in Stamford. He

* It will be seen that Owen's acquaintance with Tennyson was not very intimate. I need not say that the "Miller's Daughter," and the "Village Maiden" who was led wondering from hall to hall by her noble lover, were not one and the same person.

was very much pressed to remain by Mr M'Guffog, but he was anxious to see more of the world, and desirous of understanding more of the business in which he was engaged than he could by remaining in one locality; besides, it is natural to suppose that after so long an absence he was anxious to see his family, attachment to his parents, brothers, and sisters being a prominent feature in his disposition.

When he left Stamford he carried with him high recommendations as to character. With these he started for London, and again took up his residence at his brother's house, remaining there for some months. At about this time he visited his parents in North Wales, and he expresses himself very much gratified by the hearty welcome and the kindness he met with from all his old neighbours.

His next situation was with Messrs Flint & Palmer, large retail drapers, whose place of business was situated on old London Bridge, at the Borough end. This was one of the most respectable trades conducted on the ready-money principle. Here he had £25 a year besides his board and lodging, and with this sum he considered himself "rich and independent." It may be remarked here that he never during his life drank ordinary intoxicants or smoked, or contracted any of those habits common among young men. His work was very hard. The assistants were up and had breakfast so as to be prepared for attending to customers by eight o'clock, and during all the spring months business went on till ten or half-past ten at night. The day's work did not finish even then, as it was the custom to put the goods hurriedly by during the day, so that at eleven o'clock, when the doors were

closed, nearly everything had to be refolded, and replaced on the shelves in proper order for the next day's business. This frequently kept them up until two o'clock, and he says that "after being actively engaged on foot all day from eight o'clock in the morning, I have scarcely been able, with the aid of the banisters, to go up stairs to bed." This alarmed him, on the ground of his health, as well it might; and if it be remembered that young women, as well as young men, were thus employed, he certainly does not use too strong a term when he speaks of it as "slavery." One curious custom at Messrs Flint & Palmer's is worth mentioning. "Dressing," he says, "was then no slight affair. Boy as I was, I had to wait my turn for the hairdresser to powder, pomatum, and curl my hair, for I had two large curls on each side, and a stiff pigtail, and until this was very nicely done no one could think of appearing before a customer." Fearing the effect this drudgery might have on him, he applied to his friends to procure him another situation; but when the spring trade closed his work became much more pleasant and easy. He now enjoyed his life so well that he forgot his request concerning a new situation, but nevertheless an offer of one came to him from Manchester. Mr Satterfield, of that town, who carried on a wholesale and retail business in St Ann's Square, offered him an advance to £40 a year, with board and lodging. It was a first-class house, and, accepting the proposal, he parted from his London employers, though not without some regret, as they had personally been very kind to him.

Robert Owen always regarded himself as fortunate,

not only in the personal character of his employers, but in the character of the people who constituted the bulk of their customers. In Stamford, these were to a great extent of the higher class; while on London Bridge, they were the ordinary crowd of street customers,—working people, shopkeepers, and others. In Manchester, they were made up of the middle-class,—merchants and manufacturers; "and thus," he says, "in Mr Satterfield's I became acquainted with the habits and ideas of this class." In this way he had, at an early age, constant opportunities of observing the conduct and language of people differing very much from each other; and as he was always ready in his appreciation of what was excellent in whomsoever he had to deal with, it is not surprising that the variety of his experience during this part of his life had considerable influence on the formation of his own manners. Always quiet and unobtrusive in what he had to say, always considerate of the thoughts and wishes of others, and never in the slightest degree impatient or overbearing, all who came near him felt that he was a man to be liked, to be trusted, and to be loved, if for nothing else, simply for the manly, and at the same time child-like, earnestness which characterised all he did and said.

He remained in the employment of Mr Satterfield until he was eighteen years of age. As this period he became, in the course of business, acquainted with a wire-worker named Jones, who supplied Mr Satterfield with wire bonnet frames. It being Owen's duty to receive these frames from the maker, Jones told him of the new discoveries which were then being applied to cotton spinning, and added that he was

doing all he could to get a knowledge of these, believing there was a fortune to be made in that direction. After some time he informed him he had seen certain of these new machines at work, and felt satisfied that he could make them. He proposed that the young draper should join him, and bring into the venture one hundred pounds, as with even so small a sum to start with the profits alone would serve to increase and continue the business. At the present day this amount of capital looks so trivial as to seem almost ridiculous, but in connection with the cotton trade those days were the days of romance. Robert Owen borrowed from his brother William the required sum, gave his employer notice of his intention to leave, and entered into partnership with Jones.

CHAPTER II.

Starts as his Own Master.

To understand the important and ambitious step mentioned at the conclusion of the last chapter, and taken by Owen at the age of eighteen, the man and the time must be considered in relation to each other. Robert Owen, at his entrance into manhood, was, from all we can learn concerning this period of his life, singularly quick and clear in his apprehension; steady, punctual, and conscientious in the performance of his duties; and anxious in the discovery of improved methods. Hargreaves, Arkwright, Crompton, and

Watt had placed their wonderful inventions at the disposal of their countrymen, and these inventions were daily receiving a more extended application. The inventors created new conditions of work, which led in all directions to new acquisitions of fortune. Fox Bourne, in his "Romance of Trade," quoting from Dr Aikin, gives an account of the mode of life that existed among the Manchester manufacturers previous to this, which contrasts very strangely with what prevails at the present time, and which must have been very different from the habits and usages of the same class in 1789, when Owen entered on his first partnership. "An eminent manufacturer of that age," says Aikin, "used to be in his warehouse before six in the morning, accompanied by his children and apprentices. At seven they all came in to breakfast, which consisted of one huge dish of water pottage, made of oatmeal, water, and a little salt, boiled thick and poured into a dish. At the side was a pan or basin of milk, and the master and the apprentices, each with a wooden spoon in his hand, without loss of time, dipped into the same dish, and thence into the milk pan, and as soon as it was finished they all returned to their work."

In 1789 this state of things was much altered, but the general change was shown by individual instances which must have been constantly occurring within Owen's own knowledge; and where these were sudden and remarkable, they were no doubt frequently subjects of conversation among those with whom he associated. His partnership, therefore, and his new business were, in the circumstances, and considering his character, the most natural things imaginable.

He and his partner, who seems to have been an ignorant and unbusiness-like man, arranged with a builder for the erection of a machine-shop, with rooms for cotton spinning, and in a short time they had about forty men at work making machines, with abundant credit for the materials necessary to carry on their operations. Owen soon found that Jones was deficient in the kind of business knowledge which was most needed. He did not himself understand practically anything about the machinery they were making, but he understood book-keeping and general financial matters, and also how to overlook the men they employed. They manufactured what were called "mules," and though the business was doing well, and succeeding under his intelligent and attentive supervision, he seems nevertheless to have been anxious to get out of it in consequence of his partner's incapacity. While Owen was in this frame of mind, a man with some considerable capital agreed to join with Jones; and as they preferred having the business entirely in their own hands, after some hesitation they proposed terms which he at once accepted. The offer for his share in the business was six "mule" machines, such as they were making for sale, a reel, and a "making-up" machine, which was used to pack the yarn, when finished in skeins, into bundles for the market.

He was now nineteen years of age, and had to face the world with, so far, only a promise of the machines he had bargained for as the price of his retirement from the firm. When the time for settlement came, instead of six he only got three of the "mules" for which he had stipulated; and with these, and the

other articles enumerated above, he commenced business in Ancoats Lane, Manchester. To supply his "mules," his reel, and his making-up machine, he bought what are called rovings, which he converted into fine yarn, and sold to the manufacturers of muslin. In his "Recollections of My Life," he informs us that when he was with Mr M'Guffog, in Stamford, the chief, if not the only, manufacturer of muslins was a Mr Oldknow, of the neighbourhood of Stockport, who commenced this branch of the cotton manufacture about the year 1780. To distinguish these from the Indian manufacture, the maker called them British twill muslins. They were less than a yard wide, and sold in the Stamford shops at from 9s. to 9s. 6d. a yard, being much in demand. At the time when Owen wrote (1857), an article of much better quality might be purchased at 2d. a yard.

With his "mules" and other machinery, and the labour of three men, Owen made about £300 a year profit, and considered that he was doing very well. From this point he might have gone on increasing his machinery as his profits increased, but such a process would have been very slow at first, and no doubt he felt that in a town like Manchester, where large amounts were being constantly invested in cotton manufacture, a connection with a large firm, even though it were for a time as a servant, would be preferable to a long struggle as a small employer. A chance soon offered. A man named Lee left his situation as manager in the factory of Mr Drinkwater, to take a partnership in another concern. Mr Drinkwater advertised for a manager in the Manchester paper, and Robert Owen at once applied for the post.

Mr Drinkwater, struck by the youthfulness of his appearance, asked him his age, and what salary he required. "Three hundred a year," was the reply. "What!" exclaimed the questioner; "three hundred a year. I have had this morning I know not how many applying for the situation, and do not think that all they asked would, together, amount to what you require." "I cannot," answered the young applicant, "be governed by what others ask, and I cannot take less. I am now making that sum by my own business." This statement was followed by an offer to show his business and books. Mr Drinkwater went with him, inspected them, and after inquiry as to character, the bargain was struck, Mr Drinkwater at the same time taking the whole of his machinery at cost price.

The number of people employed in the mill of which Owen had now to take the superintendence was about five hundred. Robert Owen confesses that the acceptance of this new position led to serious doubts as to whether or not he had committed a rash and inexcusable act. He was young, and but imperfectly educated; he was shy, and almost timid in his intercourse with strangers, when such intercourse went beyond his business duties. The more he thought of these things, the more he mistrusted his own power. But he had accepted the position with his eyes open, and whatever came of it, the struggle to succeed in it must be made.

When the duties he had undertaken to discharge are considered, one need not wonder that his resolution should to some extent give way. He had, in the first instance, to assume the command of a mill with-

out a previous introduction to the workpeople. He had to purchase the raw material, to fit up the mill with some new machinery, to manufacture the cotton into yarn, to sell it when manufactured, to keep the accounts, to pay the wages, "and, in fact, take the whole responsibility of the first establishment for spinning fine cotton that had ever been erected," as successor to one of the most scientific managers of the day.

The account given of the mode in which he overcame the difficulties of his new position is interesting. "I inspected," he says, "everything very minutely, examined the drawings of the machinery, as left by Mr Lee [his predecessor]; and these were of great use to me. I was at the mill with the first in the morning, and I locked up the premises at night, taking the key with me. I continued this silent inspection and superintendence day by day for six weeks; saying merely yes or no to the questions as to what was to be done or otherwise, and during that period I did not give one direct order about anything."

The factory at that time had attained to a higher perfection than any other in the production of "fine counts," but Owen soon succeeded in greatly improving the quality, and as a natural consequence increased the business and its profits. The proprietor no doubt kept himself well informed as to the progress made. He visited the mill seldom, but the improvement of his reputation as a spinner, combined with the steady gentlemanly demeanour of the young manager, must have convinced him that he had secured the services of no ordinary man. Robert Owen makes a very frank acknowledgment of his own deficiencies in

education; stating that he at this time spoke, ungrammatically, a kind of Welsh-English, and was awkward in his manners. This, however, may be an exaggeration, the result of a too acute self-consciousness, as in after-life he wrote with correctness, and spoke without any peculiarity of accent.

At the end of the first six months, Mr Drinkwater, who had not previously asked him to visit his house, sent him an invitation to his country residence, stating that he had something of importance to communicate. Owen obeyed this call with considerable anxiety. When he arrived, he was ushered into Mr Drinkwater's "room of business," when that gentleman addressed him thus:—"Mr Owen, I have sent for you to propose a matter of business important to you and to me. I have watched your proceedings, and know them well since you came into my service, and I am well pleased with all you have done. I now wish you to make up your mind to remain permanently with me. I have agreed to give you three hundred pounds for this year; and if you consent to remain with me, I will give you four hundred for the next year, five hundred for the third, and, as I have two sons growing up, the fourth year you shall join them in partnership with me, and you shall have a fourth of the profits, and you know now what they are likely to be. What do you think of this proposal?" The reply was, "I think it most liberal, and willingly agree to it." "Then," said Mr Drinkwater, "the agreement shall be made out while you are here, and you shall take a copy of it home with you." This was a satisfactory business very rapidly transacted. Well might the manager declare that, when both

copies of the agreement were prepared and signed, he returned to Manchester "well pleased with his visit." He was born in 1771, and this event took place in 1790, so that he had not quite completed his twentieth year, and already a fortunate concurrence of circumstances, united with his own good character and intelligence, had advanced him so far on the high road to fortune that he might, without being over-sanguine, conclude that a prosperous future lay before him.

At this interview he had also conferred upon him the power of doing what he thought proper for the improvement of the business. He at once began operations by which he increased the fineness of the yarn; and to distinguish the new from the old stock, much of which was left by his predecessor, and much produced upon the plan which remained in operation after his departure, he marked the "bundles" or parcels of new yarn with his own name. With this improvement in fineness he easily got the produce of the mill into the market, and obtained for it a high reputation among the muslin manufacturers of the country. In pursuing this branch of the cotton trade, it was necessary that he should be particularly exact in the purchase of raw cotton, as none but the finest and best would answer his purpose; and the constant efforts he made to get this gave him so great a skill in buying, that he came to be regarded as one of the best judges of cotton in the market. During this time, that is towards the close of 1790 or the beginning of 1791, the first two packages of American Sea Island cotton came to England, and were placed in his hands that he might test their value by manufacturing them into yarn. When finished as yarn, the

colour was so bad that he sold a portion at a very low price to a Scotch muslin manufacturer named Craig. This man, however, soon returned to procure as much more of it as possible, the bleaching having given it an appearance and quality better than any produced up to that time.

Continuing his improvements, in about a year after he commenced the management of Mr Drinkwater's factory he had acquired such a knowledge of the various qualities of cotton, and had so improved the accuracy of the machinery used and the correctness of all the processes through which the material had to pass in order to be turned into finished yarn, that he increased the fineness from 120 "counts" to upwards of 300,—which means, that he spun out of a pound of cotton that number of "hanks," each hank containing 840 yards of thread. For this yarn the purchaser paid 50 per cent. above the list price, and even at this price he could not, when the mill was in full work, meet the demand for these fine counts.* A large muslin yarn trade grew out of this, and that the profitableness of these yarns may be understood, he informs us that he gave 5s. for a pound of cotton, which when finished into fine thread for the muslin weaver extended to near 250 hanks, for which he got from the manufacturers £9. 18s. 6d. per pound. He adds that he brought these counts afterwards to upwards of 300, and says that if he had been able to do this at

* The yarns were made up for the market in 5-lb. bundles, the "hanks" were 840 yards each, and the "counts" were according to the number of hanks in the bundle ; and the list price, was a point below which inferior goods fell, and above which superior goods rose.

the time he realised the price stated, he could have made above £36 on one pound of yarn. The only real competitor Mr Drinkwater had in these fine yarns was a Mr Buchanan, and his goods were so much inferior, that while the yarns spun by Robert Owen realised 50 per cent. above the list price, Buchanan's only realised 10 per cent. above it.

The disastrous year of 1792 brought no change in the relationship between Robert Owen and his employer. Mr Drinkwater was rich, and stood the strain firmly, whilst many of his neighbours were sunk or stranded. So satisfied was he with his manager, that he put a factory he had at Northwich, in Cheshire, under his management also, leaving the old manager in his place, but giving Owen the control of the mill, to which he attended by riding over to Northwich once a fortnight.

Things were going on with him as prosperously as he could wish, when an unexpected circumstance broke the connection, and again threw Robert Owen loose on the world to pursue his fortunes as best he could. Mr Drinkwater had a daughter of marriageable age, and her hand was sought by a large muslin manufacturer, a man of wealth and high standing in the business. He was accepted by the father, and, after some reluctance, by the daughter; and as he was ambitious that he and his intended father-in-law should stand among the foremost of the cotton lords of the district, he was very anxious that Mr Drinkwater's agreement with Owen as to a partnership should be cancelled, that the spinning concern might belong altogether to the family. Robert Owen had heard hints of this,

and when he was sent for by Mr Drinkwater he put into his pocket the agreement which was to take effect the following year. When he arrived he was at once informed by his employer of the intended marriage of his daughter with Mr Oldknow, and of the desire of that gentleman that the entire business of both houses should remain in the family. He then inquired on what condition he would give up the agreement, and retain the management of the mill. "You have now," he said, "£500 a year, and whatever sum you name you shall have." "I have brought the agreement with me," replied the manager, at the same time producing it, "and I now put it in the fire, as I never will connect myself with any parties who are not desirous to be united with me; but under these circumstances I cannot remain your manager with any salary you can give." The agreement was burned on the spot, and Owen returned to Manchester, simply promising that he would remain at his post until a suitable successor could be found.

CHAPTER III.

The Dying of the Old.

IN order to understand the contrast between the old and the new systems of industrial life in Great Britain, it will be useful to draw two distinct lines, one at 1770, the year before Owen was born, and the other at 1790, when he may be said to have commenced life as a manufacturer. The period dating back from

1770 may be described as one of hand labour, when men, women, and children, assisted by certain crude mechanical appliances, performed the whole of the work necessary to feed, clothe, and shelter the population. Human labour was the supreme element in production, the most important in all calculations regarding wealth and progress. From 1790 the man has been undergoing displacement to such an extent, that at present the machine has taken the first place, in a way to alter the basis of all calculations as to the production and accumulation of wealth.

In the old days, human labour and the condition of the labourer had to be first considered. Now the first consideration is how machinery can be applied where work has to be done, and how it shall be regulated in its operations so as to produce the most profitable result. The interim of twenty years between these two periods was one of unprecedented change. Old methods of work were rapidly giving place to new methods ; our captains of industry were arming themselves with the new weapons forged by Watt the humble machinist, Hargreaves the Lancashire carpenter, Arkwright the barber, Crompton the son of a working man who divided his labour between his little farm and his cottage loom, and others who, like Whitney the private tutor in America, were overcoming new difficulties by new appliances, as wonderful in their complicated construction as by their opportuneness and almost miraculous concurrence in point of time. These twenty years did not so much comprise a period of struggle for mastery in commercial competition, as a preparation for the mighty and ceaseless battle that has been waged from that time to the present day.

Prior to 1770 the progress of manufacturing industry was slow. The foreign trade was scarcely worth taking into account. All figures given at this period were more or less unreliable guesses. The accounts of the Custom House were badly kept, there was much smuggling, and Ireland was treated in the returns of trade as a foreign country; while down to 1798 quantities only were given and not prices; besides which, a large proportion of our exports consisted of produce, not manufactures, as corn, wool, &c. In the absence of a foreign trade of any consequence, the people depended for employment principally on the home market; and as nearly all labour was hand labour, employment extended as population increased. Making allowance, therefore, for occasional plagues and failures of crops, the business of the country would be much the same one year as another. The production and consumption would balance each other; and, in proportion to the population, the balance of accumulated capital would be little more than was necessary to supply the new demands occasioned by an increase of the people. Speculation in trade was scarcely known,—there was no new commodity to speculate in, no new markets to compete for, no rapid fortunes of mushroom growth to be striven after.

There were large flocks of sheep, because wool was needed for home use and for foreign export, and therefore mutton was abundant and cheap. The workers combined small farms with their spinning, weaving, and other occupations; and therefore bacon, eggs, milk, vegetables, and other household supplies were home productions, and by the masses of the

people easy to be obtained in moderate sufficiency. Panics in trade only occurred when a plague or a famine scourged the land; and even then, as mere matter of loss of profit to employers, or insufficiency of wages to the workers, they were not severely felt, except in rare instances. What we now understand by the word "business" was unknown. The manufactures were for the most part domestic, and were carried on in the houses of the people. The manufacturer employed a group of journeymen and a few apprentices, the number of the latter being apportioned by law to the number of the former. In this way the proportion of workers in each trade was balanced, according to the relative growth of each; and as there were no sudden displacements of labour by the introduction of machinery, as years went on old habits and methods of life were preserved, while the relation between employers and employed, commencing under an indentured apprenticeship, usually for seven years, and continued under a system of journeymanship, became a kind of family relation. As a rule, with personal knowledge there was personal respect, though not without those occasional disagreements which opposing interests will sometimes beget, however carefully they may be regulated. The employer, who had himself passed through an apprenticeship in the workshop, in most cases lived carefully, and saved a portion of his profits. With this he provided for the extension of his trade, adding room to room, or shed to shed, as demand for his commodities increased, employing as he went on a few more journeymen and taking one or two more apprentices. When ordinary slackness of trade oc-

curred, it was seldom accompanied by absolute dismissal. Each got less to do, but as a rule all got something; while a general depression, out of such a relation of friendliness as the everyday life of the workshop begot, led to such neighbourly help as prevented the most necessitous workers from throwing themselves on the poor-rates as a last and only resource. Trade was healthy, because it grew naturally by the pressure of its own requirements; and it did so in the hands of men who, being practised in it, knew what these requirements were, and therefore fitted the increased power of supply to the demand of the market. Production, depending as it did on manual labour, could not be on a sudden rapidly extended, as such extension would require a sudden increase of skilled labour. To obtain this was impossible, and even though it had been possible by immigration to procure this increase, the new comers would have been consumers, and could not have glutted the general market as does machinery, which produces without consuming.

Gaskell, in his useful work on "Artisans and Machinery," throws light on the changes made in the condition of the people, in what are now called the manufacturing districts, by the introduction of machinery. "In the year 1770," he says, quoting from William Ratcliff, "the land of our township (Mellor, fourteen miles from Manchester) was occupied by between fifty and sixty farmers; rent, to the best of my recollection, did not exceed 10s. per statute acre;*

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* Mr Pitt, in 1798, twenty-nine years later, valued the land of England at an average of 12s. per acre.

and out of these fifty or sixty farmers, there were only six or seven who raised their rents directly from the produce of their farms. All the rest got their rent partly in some branch of trade, such as spinning or weaving woollen, linen, or cotton. The cottagers were employed entirely in this manner, except for a few weeks in harvest. Being one of those cottagers, and intimately acquainted with all the rest, as well as the farmers, I am better able to relate particularly how the change from the old system of hand-labour to the new one of machinery operated in raising the price of land. Cottage rents at that time, with convenient loom-shop and a small garden attached, were from one and a half to two guineas per annum. The father of a family would earn from eight shillings to half a guinea at his loom, and his sons, if he had one or two or three alongside him, six or eight shillings per week each; but the great sheet-anchor of all cottages and small farms was the labour attached to the hand-wheel, and when it is considered that it required six or eight hands to prepare and spin yarn, of any of the three materials I have mentioned, sufficient for the consumption of one weaver, this shows clearly the inexhaustible source there was for labour for every person from the age of seven to eighty years (who retained their sight and could move their hands) to earn their bread, say one to three shillings per week, without going to the parish."

From 1778 to 1803 was the golden age of spinning and weaving, according to William Ratcliff. The new machinery had superseded the spinning-wheels, and weaving therefore was unchecked by want of weft. The weaving still went on in new loom-shops added

to the cottages, and all were filled; cotton, cotton, and nothing but cotton, was in demand, and thus all were busy and well-to-do before the great all-devouring factory, filled with steam looms, swallowed up everything else.

Up to this time the principal staple trade was wool and woollen fabrics, which was carried on, as Postlethwayth says in his "Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce," "more or less" in almost every part of the kingdom, some making one species of goods, some another. "From the multitude of people there is a great home consumption of all sorts for their use in all places; so no part of the nation making every kind or having near at hand the materials necessary for the particular kind they do manufacture, they are obliged to send for such articles as they want to the counties where they are made, or to London, which is the centre of their commerce. This occasions so general an intercourse of trade and correspondence among ourselves for the native commodities of our own country, that the inland trade of no other nation in Europe, perhaps, is equal to it." Postlethwayth's huge book, crammed with information, describes with much detail and fulness the various trades carried on, and the principal places for each branch of our textile fabrics. "The manufactures called Manchester wares, such as fustians, cottons, tapes, incles, &c., are sent on pack-horses to London, Bristol, Liverpool, for exportation, and also to the wholesale haberdashers for home consumption, whence the other towns of England are likewise served, or by the Manchester men themselves, who travel from town to town throughout the kingdom."

Of these goods, we are gravely informed that at the date of the publication of the book (1757), "they make at Manchester, Bolton, and the neighbouring places, above £600,000 worth annually." The writer tells us also that coarse woollen goods called "double-dozens and kerseys are largely manufactured in Yorkshire, and are carried to the consumers in the same manner as the Manchester wares; and as these are used for clothing the poorer sort of people in other counties, even where finer clothes are made, so the shopkeepers in these very counties of Yorkshire are obliged to buy the fine medley cloths of Wiltshire and Gloucestershire, the stuffs and serges of Norwich and Exeter, the duroys and silk druggets of London and Taunton, for the wear of the people of better condition. In like manner the traders of Devonshire and Somersetshire buy the fine woollen cloths of Wilts and Gloucester; and their camblets, crapes, and women's stuffs from Norwich; their stockings from Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Worcestershire, Yorkshire, or London."

London was, as it now is, the great centre, the several counties sending large quantities of their goods there, and getting the goods of other counties in return; and besides all this there were the great fairs of Stourbridge, Bristol, West Chester, Exeter, and Woodboroughhill, at which a great traffic was carried on. Just as this extensive and active interchange of manufactured goods was conducted, so was the exchange of raw material, wool, yarn, and other manufacturing commodities. "The fine-fleece wool of Lincoln, Leicester, and Northamptonshire, is carried on pack-horses south to Cirencester and Tedbury, in

Gloucestershire, where it is bought up and afterwards spun into yarn for the clothiers of Wilts, Gloucester, and Somersetshire, to mix with the Spanish wool in making their broad cloths; eastward the same is carried to Norwich and Bury for the manufacture of those parts; and northward to the farther parts of Yorkshire, and even into Westmoreland and Cumberland, where it is made into fine yarn, which is brought up to London to the amount at least of 100 horse-packs a week, for the making of fine druggets and camblets in Spitalfields." By this description it will be seen how active the home trade of the country was in production and distribution, as well as steady and unvarying in its operations and its results. Domestic industries were everywhere promoted and encouraged, and the population was employed, without at any time being seriously disturbed, in spinning and weaving, and otherwise preparing goods for the market, and exchanging them throughout the country. In 1750, before the old habits of trade or of life were interfered with, the sum expended on the poor was a few pounds under £690,000, which rapidly augmented after machinery began to be applied. In 1776 it was over £694,000, whilst in 1783 above two millions sterling were thus expended; an alarming advance which, as year followed year, amounted, notwithstanding the vigorous attempts made to hold it in check, in 1880 to the extraordinary sum of over eight millions sterling; and what makes this increase of the poverty of the working people of England the more remarkable is, that the foreign trade of the country, which in 1782 is given at a little over twenty-three millions sterling, import and export, is returned in 1880 as over 634 millions sterling.

The contrast given here is not intended to indicate any preference for the older times, or any desire to see restored what has passed away beyond our power of recall. Much of what has been changed has been improved; while much that has been made worse may be fairly regarded as the result of a process of change, and preparatory to a higher and better condition of things. Once the necessary machinery was invented, it would have been madness to attempt to continue the old household system of manufacturing. A more generous thoughtfulness, however, might have led to the establishment of a factory system unattended by the many grievous evils that we now shudder at as matters of history. Many of these have been done away with after much sharp conflict, and in time it may be counted on as certain that most of those yet remaining will disappear.

The great change in the manufacturing system of Great Britain may be truly regarded as a crisis of extreme danger. An alteration in the daily business life of the nation, which changed the occupations and modes of life of large masses of the people, dooming multitudes to poverty and unusual temptation, and conferring on others large gifts of fortune; destroying family influence on one side, by superseding domestic employments and the salutary relations of home; and, on the other side, so separating the employer from the worker, and so estranging both classes in regard to interests which had previously been almost identical,—the wonder is how the interruptions of the internal peace of the country, and the attacks on property by the suffering and discontented, are so few as they have been.

The interest attaching to Robert Owen's life will be found in the side he took, and the character of the battle he fought, for the purpose of lifting up those who suffered in this great change, and so directing the new forces as to give them a beneficent instead of a baneful tendency. He did not recommend at any period of his life the bringing back of the old, but the safe and equitable institution of the new. He did not fight against old oppressions, but rather against a new order of things fraught with mischief; his object being to seek for the highest advantages for the whole of society from the new productive forces, for an equitable use of the new wealth then flowing into our manufacturing districts, and to establish such a system of education as might produce a moral growth in the people at least equal to the growth of the nation in material wealth. It was no part of his policy to bring back what had passed away, but rather to understand and welcome the new,—not as it might force itself on the world in a conflict of greed and self-seeking, but modified and regulated by the wisdom and generosity of those who prize justice as the first necessity in the dealings of men; who know how marked are the retributions for its neglect, and that

> "Even-handed justice
> Returns th' ingredients of the poisoned chalice
> To our own lips."

CHAPTER IV.

Birth of the New.

THE twenty years which followed Robert Owen's birth saw the close of the era which preceded the introduction of machinery, and the opening of that in which mere human labour became secondary and subordinate. The manner in which cotton factories sprang up on the banks of the rivers where water-power was available has been referred to, and also the rapidity with which the people were drawn into them. The change may be described as complete. Numbers of the old workers, unsuited by age to fall into the new arrangements, remained, and continued to work in connection with the handloom ; but the youth and life and growing activity of the manufacturing industry passed into the mills or factories, and it is in these alone, and through them, that the progress of our huge textile industries is to be traced.

In certain branches of factory industry the labour of young people was a necessity, but there existed a strong indisposition on the part of parents to allow their children to enter the factory gates. Frequently the population was thinly scattered about the places where available water-power made it most desirable to erect cotton mills, and therefore the inconvenience felt for want of child labour was very great. Indoor apprenticeship was the rule in connection with the small industries of the kingdom ; but in the factories this arrangement was impossible, as the factory owners did not profess to teach any handicraft, as

the old master did; besides, it would have been difficult for a man to charge himself with the maintenance and care of some hundreds of young people, to whom, from the press of business, he could pay little or no attention. The obstacle, however, had to be overcome, and the plan resorted to was to obtain as apprentices, from the various workhouses of the kingdom, as large a number of the pauper children as were required, and bind them under indenture to the foreman or manager under whose superintendence they worked. They were bargained for and sent to their destination in droves; the workhouse authorities, glad enough to get rid of them, prudently stipulating that those who contracted for them should take a due proportion of the ailing and idiotic. When these children entered on the employment at which they were to spend their lives, they were housed and bedded in sheds; their food was of the poorest kind, and frequently insufficient; while the beds in which they slept (in consequence of the double shift system then commonly worked) were no sooner vacated by the day shift than the night shift took possession of them, and through this quick succession of occupants they were said never to get cold. These poor creatures were unable to look after themselves, and, as there was no one near connected with them by ties of blood, they were entirely at the mercy of those who regarded them solely as implements of labour. The records we possess of the treatment and suffering of these children are heartrending in the extreme; but bad as this state of things was, it remained unnoticed until the diseases bred among the sufferers spread alarm amongst the

people dwelling in the neighbourhood of the factories; and thus, gradually, the general outside public were made aware of this new danger.

Special facts need not be produced in proof of what is stated here. In John Fielden's "Curse of the Factory System," in Gaskell's "Manufacturing Population," in a pamphlet by Robert Blencoe,—a frightful cripple who had himself been a factory apprentice, and knew and had suffered what he described,—we find accounts of this early system of factory apprenticeship, than which there is nothing more appalling in connection with the history of the British people. These apprentices were not only half-starved and neglected, but they were brutally flogged to keep them from sleeping at their work, while the ceaseless drudgery hurried them in crowds to their graves. Except in fitful discussions carried on by newspaper correspondents, little notice was taken of the growing abominations of the factory system. When they were mentioned with a view to their condemnation, cases were brought forward in which the children were treated with kindness and humanity. In 1796, however, a committee was appointed in Manchester, known as the "Manchester Board of Health," and to this committee Dr Percival, president of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, and a friend of Robert Owen, submitted for consideration certain points connected with the factories then springing up in all directions. The objects of the association on whose behalf he reported, were to prevent the generation of diseases, to obviate the spreading of these by contagion, and to shorten the duration of those in existence, by affording

the necessary aids and comforts to the sick. "In the prosecution of this necessary undertaking," he says, "the board have had their attention particularly directed to large cotton factories established in the town and neighbourhood of Manchester, and they feel it a duty incumbent on them to lay before the public the result of their inquiries:—1. It appears that the children, and others who work in the large cotton factories, are peculiarly disposed to be affected by the contagion of fever, and that when the affection is received it is rapidly propagated, not only amongst those who are crowded together in the same apartments, but in the families and neighbourhoods to which they belong. 2. The large factories are generally injurious to the constitution of those employed in them, even where no particular disease prevails, from the close confinement which is enjoined, from the debilitating effects of hot or impure air, and from the want of active exercises, which nature points out as essential in childhood and youth to invigorate the system, and to fit our species for the duties of mankind. 3. The untimely labour of the night, and the protracted labour of the day, with respect to children, not only tend to diminish future expectations as to the general sum of life and industry, by impairing the strength and destroying the vital stamina of the rising generation, but it too often gives encouragement to idleness, extravagance, and profligacy of the parents, who, contrary to the order of nature, subsist by the oppression of their offspring. 4. It appears that the children employed in factories are generally debarred from all opportunity of education, and from moral and religious instruction. 5. From the excellent

regulations that subsist in several factories, it appears that many of these evils may, in a considerable degree, be obviated; and we are therefore warranted by experience, and are assured that we shall have the support of the liberal proprietors of these factories, in proposing an application for Parliamentary aid (if other methods appear not likely to effect the purpose) to establish a general system of laws for the wise, humane, and equal government of all such works."

This report throws a strong light on the first beginning of our present gigantic factory system. It makes known the fact that this system of itself, worked without a wise consideration for the welfare of the people, had a tendency to produce physical and moral evils of the worst kind. It proves also, that those who were profiting by these evils allowed them to strike root and flourish without any attempt to overcome them by general understanding, or salutary regulations calculated to prevent them from becoming rapidly developed, except in certain individual cases referred to in the report. The factory agitation which continued so fiercely for so many years, may be said to have begun with this document, and the evils pointed out were those for the destruction of which the fight continued to the end, viz., the effect of the factory system in producing disease and causing deterioration of the people; its prevention of education by double shifts and long hours; the dreadful moral results produced by an indiscriminate herding together of young people of both sexes, without instruction or proper control. In grappling with these evils much opposition had to be encountered. It was insisted, that as the employer's capital was his

own, he had a right to use it as seemed best to himself, without being interfered with by sentimentalists. It was urged, that if profits were large, risks were great; and that any meddling, by increasing the cost of production, would throw the trade into the hands of foreign competitors unhampered by vexatious and costly interference. It was asserted, that as machinery was expensive, it ought not to be allowed to stand idle when it could be kept in motion; and, to crown all, doctors and others who were said to have had experience in the factory districts, assured the world that the work was light and trivial, and added, rather than otherwise, to the health and happiness of the children engaged in it.

This latter was a desperate step to take, but as factory villages and towns were growing rapidly, and as doctors and other professional persons were flocking to them for patronage, as tradesmen were for custom, any amount of testimony was obtainable through the position and influence of the factory owners. Another great difficulty lay in the fact that it was strongly inculcated in the minds of the workers, that any shortening of the hours of labour would be a diminution of the wages earned,—a statement so plausible at first sight, that it is not to be wondered at if the people, who ought to have been the first to move, regarded with suspicion the honest and zealous reformers who took the field on behalf of the factory children of Great Britain. There was also a strong belief cultivated in the minds of the working men, that attempts at interference in connection with labour were a practical infringement of their liberty, and if once permitted might lead to future interferences of an oppressive kind.

The question of factory labour was therefore difficult to touch. The selfishness of the great body of factory owners, united with the gross ignorance of the factory workers, compelled, at the commencement, limited action. A general regulation of the factory system by legislation was regarded as hopeless. The factory owners were almost furious in their opposition, whilst the workers were suspicious and indifferent. There was no public opinion to rely on for the purpose of enforcing the claims of the children, and therefore the first step was limited to an attack on the apprentice system, with a loose statement as to "others" (*i.e.*, children who were not apprentices), which rounded the title of the Act, but did not interfere with the labour of those who were not apprentices. In 1802 this first Factory Act was passed by the help of the first Sir Robert Peel. It was a commencement which, whether it failed or succeeded, opened the way for earnest men determined to continue a work the vast importance of which has never been fully estimated. By this first effort the hours of work each day were limited to twelve,—not to commence before six in the morning, nor to be continued after nine at night. It provided that night work should not be practised after the June of 1804; that instruction for all apprentices in reading, writing, and arithmetic should be provided; that one suit of clothes for each apprentice should be supplied each year. It also provided that the factories should be whitewashed twice a year and properly ventilated; and that there should be separation of sexes in the sleeping apartments. The provision for factory inspection is in itself a curiosity. If the need

of inspection be estimated by the provisions of the Act in regard to hours of work, cleanliness and ventilation, separation of the sexes in sleeping apartments, instruction and clothing, it will be seen with what trembling hands such industrial abominations were touched, when it is found that to enforce the observance of a law so important, it was provided that, at the Midsummer Session of each year, in districts in which factories were situated, the justices of the peace should appoint two factory inspectors, one a justice of the peace, the other a clergyman of the Established Church ; and that the mills and factories under the Act were to be registered annually with the clerk of the peace. The penalty following on any known violation of the Act was a fine not exceeding £5, nor less than 40s. The great importance of this measure was, that it was the first step, and that it indicated a strongly felt want, and an active desire to check gross evils which had been proved to exist, and which were specified as offences against the law.

As a mere expression of opinion entertained in the country, and franked by Parliament, it was invaluable; but as a correction of the abuses against which it was directed, it was not of much use. The inspection was, as nearly as possible, worthless ; whilst the fines were too trivial to deserve a moment's consideration. The apprenticeship system to which this law applied was, by the time the law came into operation—so far as it ever did become operative—rapidly declining. When water was the sole moving power, and the factories had to be erected where the labour of children could not be procured in sufficient quantity, it flourished.

When Watt fitted his engine to the mechanism of the factories, these buildings were run up in the towns, where thickly-planted populations enabled their owners to hire child labour without apprenticing the children; and thus a law which, perhaps, would never have been of much use, became unnecessary, as the state of things for which it was framed was rapidly ceasing to exist. The parents, who were in the new situation, the natural guardians of the children, settled what should or should not be practised in regard to the employment of child labour.

The general statement made here covers a multitude of most painful details, every item of which has had overwhelming proof,—vicious example, lack of proper mental growth, coarseness and impurity, disruption of family ties and home affections, dram drinking, over-crowded dwellings, cellar residences, diseases incident to and consequent upon early and excessive toil, infant mortality, effect on adults from breathing cotton dust, scrofula, indigestion, fever, consumption, premature old age, and the pauper's provision in death. All these evils and more existed, in fact or in promise, and every thoughtful man entering on the active duties of life had to ask what his duties were to himself and his fellows. The few were gaining possession of the new implements of industry, and what ought to have been a general blessing was rapidly taking the form of a class monopoly. Society in the districts where our manufacturing industries were established, was divided into two distinctly marked classes,—those who had everything, and those who had nothing; those who were every day augmenting their possessions in land, machinery,

and capital; and those who, having only their hands to depend on, must find employment or perish. It is not necessary to say whether this state of things was an imperious necessity or a foolish blunder; whether it was soundly economic or inherently vicious. It existed, and had a tendency to grow; and it was when Robert Owen had become convinced of this that he decided what his duties in regard to these new circumstances were, and determined to perform them at whatever cost to himself. He was not a man of aggressive temper, or of combative habits; he was, in fact, an extreme example of cheerful patience and kindly tolerance. His sympathies with those who suffered were strong, and his action as a reformer was prompted by the humane activity of his thoughts as a sympathetic man. If it could be said of anyone who, at any time, sought the improvement of society, that he acted from sober and thoughtful conviction, and from a careful examination of the facts connected with his proposals, it could be said of Robert Owen. His schemes for the improvement of the condition of the people had to be carried on by the voluntary aid of others; and success or failure should be judged not solely by the character of the undertaking, but also by the character of the help received. He saw distinctly that the great deficiencies of the time were want of education, lack of consideration for the working people, want of experience in applying the new productive forces for the benefit of the community generally, and he determined to do all in his power to remedy these evils.

CHAPTER V.

Struggles Onward.

WHEN Owen gave up the management of Mr Drinkwater's mill, he had proved his value so conspicuously in the trade that, upon his resignation becoming known, he was offered a partnership by Samuel Marsland, who was going very largely into the spinning business. Marsland offered him a partnership with one-third profits, but Owen refused to accept it unless half profits were allowed. Another arrangement was near being completed with Messrs Moulson & Scarth, in which the profits were to be equally divided, and the management of the mills left entirely in Owen's hands; but before this arrangement was finished, he entered into partnership with the old-established house of Borrowdale & Atkinson, the management of the business being left to him and a brother of one of the partners.

As it was Robert Owen's duty to superintend the manufacture of the yarn, and the sale of it when made, he had to be much away with the customers of the firm. Among the places he had to visit was Glasgow, and the journey there, when he performed it for the first time, he undertook in company with a Preston manufacturer, who was on a tour of pleasure. To the traveller of the present day the journey from Manchester to Glasgow is easy enough, taking little time, and causing no anxiety in regard to trouble or risk. In the early part of Owen's life it was different. "It was," he says, "before mail-coaches were established,

and we were two nights and three days incessantly travelling in coaches. The roads were then in a deplorable condition, and we had to cross a well-known dangerous mountain about midnight called Freekstone Bar, which was then always passed in fear and trembling by passengers."

This visit to Glasgow was in a short time followed by another, and at no distant period led to his marriage and settlement in Scotland.

By this time the firm with which he was connected had become celebrated for the excellence of its goods. He was known to be the managing partner, and had a high reputation as the best fine spinner of the district, so it need scarcely be said he had entered upon a path which could not but lead to the accumulation of a large fortune. It is evident, however, that he could not give his attention solely to such an object. At that time Manchester was, as it still is, a great centre of manufacturing skill and industry, but it was also the centre of the cultivated and active thought of that part of the country. There were then residing in the town many men whose names have since become known in connection with science and literature, as well as with philanthropic effort in the interest of the children connected with the factory system. There were two societies, the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, and the Manchester College Society. Owen was elected a member of the first, and at its meetings he became personally intimate with such men as Dr Percival, the president; John Dalton, afterwards so celebrated as a philosophical thinker; Dr Ferrier, author of "Illustrations of Sterne," "Theory of Apparitions," and other works. A young man like

Owen, engaged in the trade of the district, whose education as a boy was limited to what was obtainable at a village school, and ceased altogether before he had completed his tenth year, must have been a diligent student to fit himself for association with such men even in the humblest way. His own narrative, which is sufficiently unpretending, gives us to understand that he was regarded by his associates as fitted to share in their labours and deliberations. He mentions particularly a discussion he had with Coleridge, when the enthusiastic young poet visited Manchester with a view to the establishment of the *Watchman;* and though he was very much the inferior of Coleridge in fluency and grace of expression, the eloquence and learning, he says, being certainly on the side of his antagonist, he claims for himself a superiority in directness and closeness of argument.

The leisure part of his last years in Manchester seems to have been spent chiefly among its professional, scientific, and literary men; and he informs us that he regularly contributed papers which were read at the meetings of the Literary and Philosophical Society, some of which were printed in its transactions.

It was with this society that the factory agitation began. The apprentice system which prevailed during the latter part of last century was, as has already been mentioned, characterised by many very grievous evils. The boarding, the lodging, and general treatment of the apprentices, had bred and propagated disease to a degree that had become alarming. In the January of 1796 the question was taken up by the Manchester Board of Health, and was reported on by Dr Percival, the president of the Literary and Philosophical

Society. This report established a certain number of general facts by a crowd of individual statements, and led to an Apprentice Bill, which, in the hands of the first Sir Robert Peel, was passed through the House of Commons in 1802. There can be little doubt that the able and humane Dr Percival, whilst investigating the facts on which he reported in 1796, had the active assistance and practical advice of Robert Owen; and that it was the share the latter took in this early agitation of the factory question, which prepared him for the more prominent part he afterwards played in securing better conditions of life and work for the factory population of the country.

The attention of Robert Owen, at this period, was not confined to cotton spinning, nor to the meetings and discussions of the Literary and Philosophical Society. In 1794 he lodged at No. 8 Brazenose Street, Manchester, and one of his fellow-lodgers was the celebrated Robert Fulton then unknown to fame and unblessed by fortune. Fulton informed Owen that he had invented a machine for more expeditiously digging and raising earth, to be used in cutting canals. Like most inventors of scanty means, he had had his resources almost entirely drained by the preliminary expenditure connected with patenting his invention and introducing it to the notice of the public; and he told Owen that there was little or no chance left for him but to sell a portion of his interest in the invention, which he was very unwilling to do. Owen supplied him with money to go to Gloucester, with the view of obtaining a contract for digging with his machine some portion of a new canal which was about to be commenced there; and soon after this a

partnership was entered into between them. In Owen's biographical sketch, page 65, a copy of the minutes of this partnership is given. They were drawn up between the time when Owen left Mr Drinkwater's and that at which he entered into his partnership arrangement with the Chorlton Twist Company in Manchester; but Fulton and Owen being both young men at the time, the money transactions between them were not heavy, and as Fulton had offers of larger financial support than Owen could render him, and as Owen found openings in the trade where he had acquired his experience and his reputation, each went his own way without any forfeiture of friendship. In what he has to say of Fulton, Owen always speaks of him with respect and kindness; while Fulton's letters to Owen, several of which are published, show that these feelings were reciprocated.

There is one paragraph in Owen's autobiography which, as it throws some light on the relative claims of Bell and Fulton as originators of steam navigation, may be worth reproducing:—"The money he received from me enabled him to go to Glasgow, where he saw Bell's imperfect, and as to profit, impotent, steamboat on the Clyde, which was not capable of going, without cargo, more than five miles an hour. Fulton saw immediately where the defect lay, and, knowing how to remedy it, proceeded to the United States, and did more to promote their rapid progress to great prosperity than any one living, and I consider the little aid and assistance which I gave to enable him to bestow so great an advantage on his country and the world as money most fortunately expended."

CHAPTER VI.

Visit to Scotland.

SOON after Robert Owen entered on his new partnership the business began to prosper. Indeed, it may be said that from the first the concern took its place as one of the best firms in the trade. The new Chorlton Twist Company succeeded in procuring a great reputation, and as a consequence the highest prices and the most remunerative profits. In this way a grand future, so far as wealth could secure it, was rapidly opening before him. It was at this point, however, that a very important change took place in his circumstances. During his first visit to Glasgow, and when he was about twenty-seven years of age, he met accidentally in the street a Miss Spear, who was then on a visit to the family of David Dale, the proprietor of the New Lanark Cotton Mills, as well as of other large commercial establishments in different parts of Scotland, and a very remarkable man, being at the time an extensive manufacturer, a cotton spinner, merchant, banker, and preacher. Miss Spear was accompanied by Miss Dale, who, during the conversation occasioned by this accidental meeting, inquired if Owen had seen the Falls of Clyde and her father's mills there. Receiving an answer that he had not, but was anxious to do so, she offered him a letter of introduction to her uncle, who was the manager.

New Lanark, with its beautiful surroundings of hill, wood, and water, could not fail to interest even the

dullest and least romantic person. It greatly impressed Robert Owen, and he tells us that when he had inspected the establishment (which consisted of four mills for spinning cotton, and a primitive village, all grouped on the banks of the Clyde, in one of the pleasantest parts of the valley), he turned to the friend in whose company he had journeyed to Glasgow and said, "Of all places I have seen I should prefer this in which to try an experiment I have long contemplated, and have wished to have an opportunity to put in practice," not, as he adds, supposing for a moment that his wish would ever be gratified. When he returned to Glasgow he called on Miss Dale, to thank her for the pleasure she had afforded him, and found her just leaving her father's house for a walk on the Green, on the edge of which her home stood. He accompanied her and Miss Spear, and thus he and Miss Dale commenced an acquaintance which shortly after resulted in marriage.

During this visit to the west of Scotland he discovered that the printing of his name on the bundles of twist had made him known to the muslin manufacturers, and through this he was able to considerably extend the business connection of his firm.

After his return from Scotland he met Miss Spear at her brother's house in Manchester, and on his next visit to Glasgow he took charge of a letter from her to Miss Dale. In consequence of Mr Dale's many engagements, Owen had not up to that time met him; but a few more visits to his house led to a proposal of marriage, which was not unfavourably received by Miss Dale, though with an assurance that she would take no step without the full know-

ledge and consent of her father. How an entire stranger was to obtain this was an embarrassing and difficult question. Mr Dale was a man of the highest character and standing, and his daughter, therefore, would naturally be regarded as one of the most desirable matches among the mercantile community of that part of the country. Owen was a stranger, and, though entered on a career which led almost certainly to fortune, was not rich. Questions as to his position would naturally be asked, and he felt his answers to these would scarcely be regarded as satisfactory.

He had heard that the sale of New Lanark had been talked about. Mr Dale was well advanced in years, and probably began to feel over-taxed by work. As the best excuse for seeking an interview, he decided to call at his place of business and ask if the report were correct; and if so, what were the conditions on which the property could be purchased. Owen was at this time twenty-seven years of age, but looked much younger. When he was shown into the counting-house, and had made known his business, Mr Dale replied doubtingly, and told him bluntly that he thought him too young for such an undertaking. Owen replied that he was in partnership with persons older than himself, mentioning their names, and assuring Mr Dale that if an agreement could be come to as to price, there was capital enough to work the concern. On receiving this information Mr Dale became more interested, and asked him if he had seen the mills. Owen informed him that he had, but that he had in no way examined details. "Well," said the old man, "I would recommend you to go and

examine, and return to Manchester, and make your report to your partners. If they should have any desire to become the owners, I shall be prepared to enter into negotiation with them for the whole of the property." Owen was a sound man of business, his undertakings in trade throughout his life were signal successes. In these, as a rule, he held the managing power in his own hands, however many partners he might have; and whatever differences he may have had with his partners during the time he conducted the New Lanark establishment, it may be noted that no misunderstanding arose on mere business grounds. The establishment was always profitably conducted as a trading concern, and always paid well. That he differed with one set of partners and separated from them is true; but this difference arose simply because the other members of the firm thought he was expending too much of the profits in the interest and for the advantage of the workers, especially in regard to the schools he erected for the children of the village.

CHAPTER VII.

Purchase of the New Lanark Mills.

ROBERT OWEN determined to fight his battle with Miss Dale's father on the most tenable ground he could find. He felt that a display of business ability was most calculated to forward his plans, and he determined to set himself fairly to work.

Having received from Mr Dale the authority to

examine the Lanark establishment thoroughly, he at once left Glasgow for New Lanark. Having made a careful examination of the whole concern, so as to understand its actual condition as well as its capacity for development, he proceeded to Manchester, and placed a report on the matter before the members of both the firms with which he was connected. Knowing his business sagacity they at once decided to open negotiations, and, as a preparatory step, deputed a member of each of the firms to return with him to Scotland for this purpose. In the meantime Miss Dale had told her father of Robert Owen's proposal. Such an alliance, however, was far from acceptable to him, and he at once expressed himself opposed to it, at the same time stating his belief that nothing more would be heard of Owen either as a wooer or a purchaser. He regarded the proposal to buy the mills as a pretence. In this state of things, Owen and his two partners, Mr John Barton and Mr John Atkinson, arrived in Glasgow. They immediately waited on, and made all necessary explanations to, Mr Dale, who seemed surprised and pleased by their presence, and by the frank manner in which the interview was conducted. The two houses of Borrowdale & Atkinson, of London, and Messrs Barton's, in Manchester, stood high in the commercial world; and as Mr Dale was one of the directors of the Bank of Scotland, to which they referred him, he asked them to call on the following day, saying that in the meantime he would make such inquiries as he thought necessary. His inquiries satisfied him, and when the three partners again called upon him, he said he was willing to treat with them for the land, village, and mills

at New Lanark, with everything as it then stood. When questioned as to the price, however, he was at a loss how to value the property, as his brother and another person managed it for him. He himself was very seldom there, and only for short periods, as his chief business lay in Glasgow. "But," said he, "Mr Owen knows better than I do the current value of such property, and I wish he would name what he considers a fair price as between honest buyers and sellers." After some consideration, and after recovering somewhat from the surprise which this proposal caused him, Owen said, "My estimate, after having made a general inspection of the establishment, is that £60,000, payable at the rate of £3,000 a year for twenty years, would be an equitable bargain on both sides." Mr Dale was known to be a man of good business capacity, and of plain straightforward speech. No doubt, as he had entertained the idea of selling the place, he knew about the sum it ought to bring, so, to the surprise of all, he merely said, "If you think so, I will accept the proposal, if your friends also approve of it." The purchasers were prepared to reply at once, and on the spot the bargain was made by which New Lanark passed out of the hands of David Dale into those of the New Lanark Twist Company. Here again Owen's attachment became mixed up with business. The new proprietors had agreed to enter on immediate possession, but there was a slight, though not to Robert Owen, an unpleasant impediment. In the middle of the village there were two gardens, and in each of these there stood a house, one occupied by the manager of the mills, and one used by Mr Dale as a

summer residence for his daughters, who at the time of the purchase were there. Mr Dale proposed to remove them at once, but this was protested against, and they therefore remained undisturbed for about six weeks longer, when Mr Dale sent for them to return, "learning, I suppose," says Robert Owen, writing some fifty years afterwards, "that Miss Dale and I had frequent opportunities of seeing each other;" and he alludes to the fact that "with her sisters we often enjoyed walks among the beautiful scenery on the banks of the Clyde, passing our time very much to our satisfaction."

Ultimately all difficulties vanished, and this "romance of trade" ended in a marriage, so prosaic and simple that it is worth recording in Owen's own words. "Our marriage took place in Mr Dale's house in Charlotte Street, near to Glasgow Green, where our early courtship commenced. The ceremony, if ceremony it could be called, was according to the marriage rites of Scotland, and surprised me not a little. We were married by the Rev. Mr Balfour, an old friend of Mr Dale, although he was of the regular Scotch Church, and Mr Dale was at the head of a dissenting or independent sect. When we were all met on the morning of our marriage, waiting for the ceremony to commence, Mr Dale being there to give his daughter to me, and the younger sisters of Miss Dale acting as bridesmaids, Mr Balfour requested Miss Dale and me to stand up, and asked us if we were willing to take each other for husband and wife. Each simply nodding assent, he said, without one word more, 'Then you are married, and you may sit down,' and the ceremony

was over." Mr Balfour afterwards explained to the bridegroom that the ceremony was usually longer, the rule being to address the young people on their duties in the marriage state, but that he could not think of doing so to one of Mr Dale's children, as their father was well known to be a man whose exhortations and example left nothing to be done in that respect.

Immediately after their marriage, Owen and his wife set off for Manchester, it having been decided that in the meantime the management of the mills should remain in the hands in which it had hitherto been, until other steps could be taken. It was very soon decided, however, that the necessary changes should take place with as little loss of time as possible, and arrangements having been made to admit of Owen remaining altogether in Scotland as managing partner, he returned to that country within three months, and on the 1st of January 1800 commenced operations as a cotton manufacturer at New Lanark. In recording this he uses the word "government" instead of management, his intention being, as he states, not to be a mere manager of cotton mills, as such mills were at that time generally managed, but to introduce principles which he had successfully tried with the workpeople in Mr Drinkwater's factory, and to change the condition of the people, whom he found surrounded by circumstances which had an injurious influence on the entire population of New Lanark.

On commencing his task he had to encounter many obstacles. All those in any position of management had acquired their habits and modes of action under a system of which he entirely disapproved. Much

had to be undone, before anything tending in the direction he wished to go could be accomplished. He therefore first set to work with the purpose of ascertaining and making record of everything that appeared to him to require alteration, and, as he pursued his inquiries, he came gradually and deliberately to the conclusion that it was absolute reconstruction, not partial alteration, that was necessary. The character of the people employed in the mills was anything but satisfactory. Drunkenness and consequent neglect of work were but too common; while theft was practised to such an extent, that Mr Dale had suffered seriously through this evil habit. It is almost a necessity in great establishments situated in out-of-the-way places, that the persons employed should, to a considerable extent, be made up of waifs and strays, who, settling permanently nowhere, are to be found everywhere, without being of much use anywhere. There was a prejudice at the time against employment in cotton mills, and therefore sober, honest, steady people were not willing to break up their homes wherever they might live and take up their residence in places where the character of the population was not likely to be to their taste, and where, if anything occurred to interfere with the prosperity of the establishment they worked in, they must again remove before they could hope for new employment.

It is evident, from the trouble taken by Robert Owen to explain the difficulties that beset him at the commencement of this undertaking, that he regarded it as a critical point in his life. He seems to have felt that he had on his hands a great commercial and

social experiment, entered on chiefly by his advice, carried on under his management, and depending on him for its success. His first difficulty lay with the people, and the ordinary way of getting over it would have been to discharge them in large numbers, at whatever cost, and get others in place of those dismissed. This is the way in which, in other hands, it is most likely the improvement would have been commenced. Owen, however, had other plans in his mind, the soundness of which he was anxious to prove. He believed that by judiciously altering the conditions in which the people worked, so as to make those conditions better, a corresponding change would be gradually effected in the character and disposition of the people themselves; and that, in this way, a more permanent improvement, beneficial to all, would be effected, than by the ordinary method of coercion or discharge. Working men as a rule so seldom receive this kind of consideration, that when good employers in any degree adopt it, they seldom believe it is meant for their good, and hence they too frequently continue in the attitude of suspicion and distrust caused by the ordinary treatment they are subjected to. "When," says Owen, "I mentioned to my friends and nearest connections that my intention was to commence a new system of management, on principles of justice and kindness, and gradually to abolish punishment in governing the population, they one and all smiled at my simplicity in imagining I could succeed in such a visionary scheme, and strongly urged me not to attempt so hopeless a task. My mind, however, was prepared for it, and also to encounter whatever difficulties might arise." The population

consisted of about thirteen hundred people in families settled in the village, and between four and five hundred pauper children procured from the surrounding parishes, whose ages appeared to be from five to ten years, but were said to be from seven to twelve. These children were well lodged, fed, and clothed by Mr Dale's directions, and there was an attempt made to teach them to read and write after the labour of the day was over; but, as Owen remarks, endeavours to teach the children when they were thoroughly exhausted, however well meant, tormented them without doing any good. In relation to this part of the population, he made up his mind at once that no more pauper children should be received, and also determined that the village streets should be improved, and new and better houses built to receive additional families to fill the places of the pauper children who otherwise would have to be brought into the village. He decided, also, that the interior of the mills should be re-arranged, and the old machinery replaced by new, gradually and as opportunity occurred. Whatever of evil the factory system was producing at this time accompanied it wherever established. Cotton spinning and weaving were highly profitable, and those who carried on the business amassed large fortunes rapidly; but, as already pointed out, this was done without any kind of consideration for the people. Whether they were healthy or ailing, was simply a matter of calculation as to the efficacy of their work, and the difference in cost of providing for them in sickness compared with their cost in a state of comparative health. In the old system of labour, the associations of the workshop, as

already stated, bred friendships that softened and humanised the struggles of life; while in the present day, our discussions and arrangements as to the rights of the workers and the duties of employers, have led to the establishment of practices legally enforced and voluntarily adopted, which provide, to a considerable extent, for the well-being of our factory workers; but at the time when Robert Owen entered on the government of New Lanark, there was no protection even of the slightest kind. Each individual man made his calculations as to his sense of duty to his fellow-creatures and his desire to enrich himself; and from what we have seen, the desire to grow rich, leaving the weak, the ignorant, and the poor to take care of themselves, was the predominant desire among the manufacturers of the country.

To go back from where we stand at present to the last year of the eighteenth century, when Owen entered on his duties as a factory owner and manager at New Lanark, is to pass into a state of things almost incredible in connection with factory labour; but, bad as it was, the employers had come to regard it as the natural condition of things, brought about, not because they did not do their duty, but because the people were too ignorant and depraved to avail themselves of the many advantages, in regard to self-improvement and progress, belonging to the new system. There was some degree of truth in this, not as an excuse for neglected duty on the part of the employers, but rather as a statement of the depravity that had extended and deepened, as a consequence of the criminal indifference of a large majority of the factory owners. The people employed in the

cotton mills, especially those who had worked in them from boyhood and girlhood, had gradually lost all proper sense of self-respect, and acquired degrading habits of self-indulgence, such as are usually found among the ignorant and oppressed.

CHAPTER VIII.

His Policy at New Lanark.

ROBERT OWEN'S partners were commercial men, who of course looked for interest on their investment, and also for a fair profit on the undertaking, and in every change he made this had to be kept in view. On the other hand, the workers were suspicious of new masters, who were strangers from England, and who as such were watched in all they did with distrust, and opposed when any change gave a colourable excuse for opposition.

As a stranger Owen did not understand the best way of addressing himself to a population who spoke a mixture of Lowland Scotch and Erse, a considerable proportion of them being from the Western Highlands. In fact, the general relationship was precisely the same as in nearly all manufacturing establishments in the kingdom, The workpeople thought they had been passed into the hands of a new body of proprietors who would try to feed themselves fat upon them, and then perhaps hand them over in turn to another set of new men who would continue the same process, leaving them poor, ignorant, and miserable,

as they had found them. It was not to be expected that they could see or comprehend the schemes for their welfare that had gradually been forming in the mind of the young managing partner, nor could he, by any process he was master of, convince them that he was about to make the improvement of their condition the basis of his work. As a first step towards gaining their good-will, he sought out the individuals who had most of their respect and confidence. To these he explained himself fully, in such a manner as to be clearly understood. He told them they were not to judge hurriedly, and by each individual act, but by the general policy he pursued; and he asked them to make known to the others, in their intercourse with them, that his intention was to permanently improve their condition, and that it would be to their interest to co-operate with him in carrying out the objects he had in view.

One of his first tasks was to teach them the value of cleanly habits in regard to their persons and houses, and all that was possible as example and encouragement was done in this direction. He found also that the small retail shopkeepers of the village bought and sold their goods on credit, and that therefore the worst things were purchased at the highest prices. The working people of the manufacturing districts have grown rich in co-operative experience since that time, and therefore need not be told that a general system of credit involves heavy risks; that the goods paid for have to carry the cost of those not paid for, and as much more as a credit system among the poor may enable an unscrupulous dealer to squeeze out of those who depend on his good-will

for the continuance of their daily food. In New Lanark the quality of the goods supplied to the people was very inferior, and the prices very high. "I arranged," says Owen, "superior stores and shops from which to supply every article of ordinary daily consumption." He bought everything with ready money in the first markets; and contracted for fuel, milk, and other articles produced in the neighbourhood, so as to secure all the advantages of a large ready-money purchase. These articles were brought to the doors of the people, and supplied to them at cost price, at a saving of 25 per cent. in the expenditure of their wages. By this arrangement alone an improvement in health and comfort very soon became perceptible among them.

Working men are ready enough to credit the well-intentioned action of employers when it is not accompanied by conditions that counterbalance the proposed good, and so it was in New Lanark. The suspicion and distrust of the people gradually began to give way. Their new employer and manager had been six years among them; and in such a relationship, shut in as it were from the rest of the world, in the seclusion of the Lanark valley, the feelings of people towards each other soon become known. Robert Owen discovered that he was rapidly growing into favour with the workers at the mills. The event by which he made a complete conquest of their good-will occurred about this time, namely in the year 1806. In this year the United States, in consequence of diplomatic differences, placed an embargo on the export of cotton to Great Britain. As a natural consequence, the prices of raw cotton advanced so as to

greatly cripple the manufacturers in the working of their mills. Whenever cost of production through any cause runs unnaturally high, the manufacturer has to calculate very narrowly, whether it is better to make for a future market at the risk of sudden reductions of price, or to partially or wholly stop his mill. In this case, as in all other similar cases, some acted on one policy and some on another. The dilemma is a very serious one, particularly where work is carried on in out-of-the-way places. To continue working, means heavy purchases of raw material, as well as payment of wages. To stop, occasions the disorganisation of the establishment by the dispersion of the people, who are compelled to go elsewhere in search of employment: and the misery communities of men suffer is great when such a policy has to be pursued. The thought of the privations of the people weighed heavily on Robert Owen's mind, and though he determined on the stopping of the works as the safest course to be pursued for himself and his partners, he decided to pay full wages to the people, for simply attending to the machinery and keeping it in good working condition. He did this for nearly four months, and during that time paid seven thousand pounds to the workers without one penny being deducted from their full wages. This proceeding, he says, won for him the "confidence and the hearts of the whole of the population." From that time forward they went confidingly with him in whatever he proposed, so that he had no obstruction in doing whatever his partners permitted him to undertake.

Up to this point we simply see him fighting manfully with the difficulties by which he was immediately

surrounded; reforming such abuses as were operating to the injury of the people; giving to them more comfort, more independence, more manliness, more hope; above all, gaining among them that confidence and co-operation which might enable him to work out the changes on which he relied for proving the practicability of reforms that might be applied to the rapidly growing cotton industry in all its branches throughout the kingdom. Writing as an old man, he says:—"When urging the improvement of society, the question has often been asked, How will you begin? I have replied, In the same manner in which I commenced the change of New Lanark." He studied the causes that were producing the evils he sought to remedy, and gradually superseded these by methods less injurious, such as were calculated to produce beneficial instead of mischievous results.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr Dale's Confidence in Him.

In the sketch he gives of his own life, Robert Owen passes very briefly over the private concerns of those immediately connected with him. His relations to his father-in-law became of the closest and most affectionate kind. At first he and his wife spent the summer in the house in the centre of the village garden already spoken of, while the winter was passed at Mr Dale's residence, in Charlotte Street, Glasgow, Mr Dale being very much with them. We are told

that from the time when Owen married his daughter, up to the time of Mr Dale's death, an unpleasant word never passed between them ; and it is to the credit of both, that though David Dale was a leading man at the head of about forty dissenting churches in Scotland, and though Owen believed that the fundamental doctrine of all of them—namely, the voluntary nature of belief, and, therefore, responsibility for belief—was erroneous, they argued their differences out with a good temper founded on a strong faith in each other's sincerity, and escaped the anger and uncharitableness to which people discussing such subjects are often liable. Frequently, at the end of one of their friendly disputes, the old man would say to Owen, with a kindliness of expression which was peculiar to him, "Thou needest be very right, for thou art very positive." And this was certainly true, as no man ever stood more firmly on the side of anything which he believed to be of importance to the world ; but it should be added, that no man ever did so in a gentler and more kindly spirit. It is clear, from what Robert Owen records of him, that David Dale was, in every sense of the term, a good man. Apart from their disputes on religion, in conversation on general subjects, in the attention they gave to practical measures of improvement for the poor, and for the working people, they rarely differed. "Such," says Owen, "were the feelings created in me by his natural simplicity, his almost unbounded liberality and benevolence, and his warm-hearted kindness, that my affection for him daily increased as long as he lived." David Dale died in the arms of his son-in-law, to whose care he confided

his unmarried daughters; and in telling the story of his death, Owen tenderly assures us that it was "felt as a great public loss, for he was universally respected, and loved by all who knew him. There was a peculiarly attractive and winning benevolence in his manner that won the hearts of all who approached him, but especially of those who were admitted to his confidence. As one who had his full confidence in all his affairs for the last six years of his life, to whom he was most affectionately kind, I felt his loss, as a parent and confidential friend, to whom I was attached in a manner only known to and felt by myself, as though I had been deprived of a large part of my own existence. The morning after his decease the world appeared a blank to me, and his death was a heavy loss and was severely felt by every member of his family."

Previous to his death, Mr Dale, with the help of Robert Owen, very much contracted his manufacturing operations. Among other cotton mills, he was a partner in one in Sutherlandshire, and this Owen visited in company with Mr George M'Intosh, partner of Mr Dale, and father of the inventor of the macintosh waterproof. This journey, like his first trip into Scotland, is curious, by the facts he notes in reference to travelling in Scotland at that time. There were no steamboats, no mail-coaches, not even common stage-coaches. The roads were in a wretched state, having been originally made by General Wade for military purposes. On foot or on horseback was the ordinary way of travelling, but Owen and his companion decided to post, if possible;

and in order to do this they had to hire horses and a carriage to go the whole distance and back again with them. They arranged to pay thirty shillings a day until their return, and not to travel more than twenty miles a day, which he says was considered hard work. They were also to pay all the tolls, and the driver, but he is not quite clear whether they had to feed the horses or not. He remembers, however, that they had to walk up all the hills, and down many of them; and occasionally, when the hill was long and steep, they had to assist the horses by pushing behind.

To Robert Owen this was a journey of great interest. There were few travellers in Scotland at that time, and he had never been in the Highlands before. His companion, who had been over the ground many times, entertained him with stories of adventures, some of which had happened in the mountain solitudes of Sutherland through which they travelled. When passing one of the glens, Mr M'Intosh told Owen that he had once been surprised there by an eagle which suddenly swooped close beside him. On following the flight of the bird, he saw there was a pair of them, and in another moment he was satisfied they meant to attack him. As he rode forward, one of them darted directly at his eyes. Being armed with a stout riding-whip, he beat off his assailant, but they both attacked him several times singly, one a minute or so after the other. Had they attacked him together, their swiftness and power were such that he doubted if he would have been able to resist their united force.

At the time of this tour Owen's name was known

generally as an active and intelligent manufacturer, and successor to David Dale, while his companion was regarded with great respect in the north of Scotland for his patriotic attempts to introduce the manufacture of cotton into that part of the kingdom. In Inverness they were entertained at a public dinner by the corporation, the provost presiding, and had conferred on them the freedom of that ancient royal burgh, while on their return they visited many of the respectable Highland families.

Owen kept a journal of this expedition, but during his many changes and vicissitudes he lost it. This was to him a matter of great regret, as he was much interested and gratified by the hospitality he received, and the many kindly qualities he found in the people he met with ; but more especially as it was during these visits, and the interchange of ideas that resulted from them, that he first began seriously to advocate his convictions on the subject of the formation of opinions and character. This was in 1802, and from this period he never ceased to urge, by argument and practical demonstration, the importance of education as a national necessity, and the duty of the nation to acknowledge this great truth, and to exert its utmost power in training the masses of the people in accordance with it.

CHAPTER X.

The Fight and its Difficulties.

HOWEVER Robert Owen's mind might have been occupied with his larger and more important plans for the future, he never lost sight of the daily detail by which he traced the progress he was making in improving the manners and character of the people under his care, or ceased from devising such additional changes as might be useful in helping him to advance the end he had in view. He found that through habits contracted during the defective management of the men acting for Mr Dale, small pilferings had grown to be very common. To prevent or detect these he contrived plans which in time were effectual. He devised a series of checks in every department of the business, by means of which a wrong thing done at any one point, was almost immediately detected at some other point; and to compensate for any defect there might be in this system of checks, he had presented to him every morning, returns of the previous day's proceedings, and obtained frequent balances from every department; thus impressing on the minds of all, the fact that his eye was constantly on them, and that whatever went wrong would be discovered sooner or later.

One of these checks, which had reference to the conduct of the workers, he states to have been effectual. He had placed behind each a four-sided piece of wood, about two inches long and one broad, each side painted a different colour,—black, blue,

yellow, and white,—tapering at the top, and fitted so as to hang on a wire, with any one side to the front, and the side to the front indicated what the conduct of the worker had been on the previous day. Black meant bad, blue middling, yellow good, and white excellent. Books of character were provided for each department, and these colours were entered daily to the credit or discredit of each individual worker, being numbered 1, 2, 3, 4; and these numbers were entered, and an average made every two months, or six times a year, so that Owen could tell at a glance how all the workers had conducted themselves during the whole of the year. There was no secret in this, it was done openly, and every one knew what it meant. The people knew that their employer would examine the record, and that he would value each accordingly. If any one thought injustice had been done, appeal was open. When this plan was commenced, there were many black and many blue marks, but gradually these gave way to yellow and white. In this way he saw regularly the change which was taking place for the better, and in the end found that he had corrected nearly all the errors and faults that existed so abundantly when he entered on the management of the mills.

For eight years he went on quietly doing everything in his power to produce individual and local changes for the better, previous to venturing on the more important and more general experiments on which he meant to base his appeal to the public and the legislature for such general changes in the factory system as might correct its worst evils. This was to be made when he had done what was practicable to

overcome the many evils he found existing in the factories and the village in connection with the employment and the homes of the people under his control, and to introduce the plans he had been meditating in their interest. With this view he first turned his attention to the very young,—to the infants, in fact. The accommodation in the houses of the workers was far from being favourable to the training of the young. In every respect it was too limited to allow mothers to go through their household occupations without feeling inconveniently the pressure of the children, without speaking to them frequently in a manner and tone calculated to be injurious in the early formation of their characters. "In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred," he remarks, "parents are altogether ignorant of the right method of treating children." That this was true of the masses of the working people in the manufacturing districts is certain. He saw how many evils in after-life this state of things led to, but he also saw the many obstacles that would be opposed to any attempt he might make to alter it. To erect and furnish such buildings as he thought necessary for the proper education of the young, required an expenditure, in the first instance, of about £5,000; and, when this was done, a considerable annual outlay would be needed to keep up such a system and carry it on effectually. He was satisfied in his own mind that in time this outlay and expenditure would bring a satisfactory and an ample return, in the improved character of the children, as well as in the improved condition of their parents; but he had to remember that his partners went into the business for profit as

cotton spinners. They were commercial men, and it was to the annual balance-sheet they looked for satisfaction, and not to the character of the population employed in the mills. Besides this, there were the prejudices of the parents, who possibly would not like to part with their children during the whole day, at so early an age as he felt it would be desirable to take them ; but perhaps the most serious difficulty was to be found in the fact that he was opposed, as he says, in all his views, by the parish minister. This gentleman regarded the managing partner at the New Lanark mills as a dangerous innovator, and, conscientiously enough no doubt, felt it his duty to watch Owen's proceedings narrowly, and to oppose him by every means in his power, when he suspected him of, even in the most remote way, trenching on his right, as minister of the parish, to the spiritual and moral supervision of the people. With his ideas on education and the formation of character, it was impossible that Robert Owen could allow any religious minister to interfere with the working of his plans; but it was perhaps just as unreasonable to expect that any minister, zealous for the welfare of his flock, should allow an experiment in which he was denied active interference to go on without opposition. The first difficulty of Owen, however, lay with his partners. He had carefully matured his plans, and worked out his estimates with all necessary precision. The steps he had already taken had greatly improved the population, and after watching the results of his labours, in profit to the establishment, for nearly nine years, he outlined the further changes he proposed to make, and pointed out the advantages likely to result from them; but his

proposals went so far beyond the view of his partners as to alarm them seriously. The leading members of the firm went from London and Manchester to visit New Lanark, and stayed there several days, so as to give it a thorough inspection. They were much pleased with what they saw, and when they left promised they would explain Owen's views fully to the other partners.

When the London and Manchester partners met, they decided to present him with a large silver salver as a slight token of their satisfaction, and this he regarded as a good augury. Some of them, however, were timid; and after he had waited a few months he had another visit. To this second deputation he explained his intended measures step by step, and stated the beneficial effects he expected them to produce. They hesitated, demurred, objected; but he told them firmly that he could only continue to manage the establishment in the way he considered best. Up to this point his plans had been highly successful, and if they declined to go forward with him, he was prepared to make suggestion of a price for the establishment, which he would give or accept. They asked him to name the amount he was prepared to offer, and he said he was willing to take or give £84,000. They at once took the matter into consideration, and ended by accepting the offer to go out. The price was an advance on the original purchase of £60,000,—a satisfactory increase of value in nine years, though no doubt some portion of this would be for improvements and new machinery.

At this point it may be said Owen's warfare for principles began. Hitherto he had been gradually,

within the limits of his daily experience, testing his ideas in regard to human character. He had satisfied himself that the first and most important duty men could impose on themselves, was that of properly training and providing for the young; and that this should be proved, in connection with the great industry he was engaged in, was the settled determination of his mind. He saw growing up around him a comparatively new business, day by day increasing in bulk, and drawing to it the labouring population of the country; and he saw in connection with this, as a result of the large profits it yielded, a system of intensified individual selfishness, which operated generally with little or no regard for the public good. The natural fruits of such a system, worked in such a spirit, were most painfully apparent on all sides. The health, the morals, the happiness of the workers were rapidly giving way, with nothing that could be regarded as a compensating advantage but the wealth that was as rapidly flowing into the hands of the manufacturing classes. Individual interest was fast establishing itself, as the all-sufficient and sole regulating force in everything connected with business. It is no doubt natural and powerful, and ought to have its influence acknowledged and allowed for, but not to the exclusion of combined action for general purposes of good, unattainable, under certain circumstances, by individual men. The right of combination belongs to men in classes and communities, and to the working men as to all other men; and much excellent work has been accomplished by trades unions and other combinations since the power to combine became legal. When Robert Owen was

carrying on his operations at Lanark this power did not exist, and therefore the working men of the country, in all its industries, were at the mercy of their employers. Individually they were too weak to do anything, and the combination laws prevented them from acting collectively, either for the purpose of attack or defence. What they have done, since the repeal of those most unjust laws, by trades unionism and co-operation, might have been commenced many years sooner, and much greater results have been realised.

Owen's proposals, at the time they were made, were admirably suited to the existing condition of things. At that time no nation was competing with Great Britain in the cotton trade. The competition was only among native manufacturers, and prices in their downward tendency were only checked by the average profit expected, when added to the cost of production. The performance of the duties insisted on by Robert Owen, would have greatly added to the wellbeing of the workers, but it is not at all certain that they would have perceptibly added to the cost of production. His own practical experience convinced him, that the improvement in the people as workers, as well as men and women, would have more than covered the cost; and from his success as a manufacturer, while making his experiments, it is reasonable to believe he was right. There were further advantages, the importance of which need not be discussed now; but it requires no great stretch of the imagination to perceive that a foundation of goodwill, of friendliness and co-operation, in regard to the great industries of the country, between

employers and employed, would have produced far higher results for all classes than any we can see at the present moment.

CHAPTER XI.

New Partnerships.

By this time it was well known that the New Lanark establishment, under the management of Owen, was almost certain to be successful, and a new partnership was soon formed. The high integrity of Owen and his practical skill were beyond doubt. The only question was whether, through zeal for the welfare of the workers, or (to ascribe his action to a motive with which many might be disposed to credit him) out of a too great attachment to his own ideas, he might not go so far as to land the company in a loss. However the affair might be regarded, it is nevertheless certain that he had no difficulty in getting as many partners and as much capital as he wanted for the purpose of carrying on the concern. Two persons, named Dennistown and Campbell, sons-in-law of Mr Campbell of Jura, who was distantly related to Robert Owen's wife, and who had placed £20,000 in his hands for investment, joined him. Mr John Atkinson, one of his previous partners, also requested to be admitted into the new co-partnery.

In a short time Owen set about the erection of the new schools, and was proceeding in a manner satisfactory to himself, when his new partners objected

as the old had done, declaring that they were cotton spinners and commercial men carrying on business for a profit, and, as such, had nothing to do with educating children, any more than any other co-partnery of cotton spinners in the kingdom. Not only did they do this, but they objected to every other form of improvement which he was making for the benefit of the workers. In fact he found himself in a worse position than ever, as these men objected not only to the investment of money for such a purpose in any form, but also exclaimed against the salaries given for superintendence and the wages paid for labour.

Notwithstanding this, Owen went quietly on, carrying out his plans with his usual determination of purpose, until they served him with formal notice not to proceed with the schools. Finally, they gave notice for a dissolution of partnership,—being determined, if possible, to keep the works in their own hands, and to rid themselves of Owen in the capacity of a partner. He offered now, as in the previous case, to name a sum which he would give or take. This proposal they refused, and decided that the works should be disposed of by auction. He was much averse to this, but as the rest of the partners had resolved on this course, there was nothing else to be done. The determination of these gentlemen was to buy-in the place, and that they might have a good bargain as purchasers, they quietly reported unfavourably as to its value, naming £40,000 as the highest penny it was worth.

While they were thus employed, Owen started for London, where his name was by this time well known,

and succeeded in forming a co-partnery of the first respectability, including Jeremy Bentham, the utilitarian philosopher. When his new partners asked the value of the works, he replied that they should not allow them to go under £120,000. He was empowered to go to that sum at the sale. Armed thus, he and two of his new partners proceeded to Glasgow. One of the conditions of the sale was that no bid should be below £100. His old partners were all there, and bid for themselves; but he bid through an agent to whom he had given orders to follow the other side, always bidding just £100 in advance. What is called the upset price was £60,000. They wished to put it at £40,000, but as Owen offered to give £60,000, which they refused, it was put up at £60,000. On the plan arranged, the agent acting for Mr Owen followed, and steadily headed them by his quiet bid of £100 in advance, until in the end the property they had declared not to be worth more than £40,000 was knocked down to Owen at £114,100, his opponents having gone as far as £114,000.

As soon as the purchase was completed, Owen and his new partners—the two, that is, who had attended the sale—posted off for the works triumphantly in a coach and four. The inhabitants of both the Lanarks had sent scouts in advance, to give notice of their coming; and as they approached the old town, the people poured out on them, hurraying with delight, and unharnessing the horses, drew them into Lanark, when they were handed over to the villagers, who took them to the end of their journey, where they were received with the most sincere and heartfelt demonstrations of gratitude and joy. "My new

partners," he says, when describing this scene, "seemed to congratulate themselves that they had become connected with such people and such an establishment. It was a day and a proceeding which I shall never forget. It interested me deeply, and, if possible, increased my determination to do them (the people) and their children all the good in my power." It is with very excusable pride that Robert Owen dwells with more than usual satisfaction on this part of his story. He had managed the establishment for fourteen years in such a manner as to win the entire affection of the workers. He had done this by means of a liberality which had caused two sets of partners to separate from him. The second co-partnery had only lasted for four years, through nearly the whole of which time he had to put up with opposition of the most vexatious kind, an opposition in which the other partners were unanimous. Nothing but the all-absorbing desire to improve the condition of the people placed under his care, together with a positive belief that he was not doing this to the injury of his partners, could have supported him in the conflict. Under such circumstances it must have been a matter of great satisfaction to him, when the books were balanced, that over the four years during which the partnership continued, it was found, "after allowing 5 per cent for the capital employed, that the net profit was £160,000."

Owen now felt at liberty to act, and therefore pushed forward the schools which had been delayed by the opposition of his late partners. In about two years from this time, he had completed and furnished them in such a manner as to attract the attention of

all parties interested in education. In the infant schools the young were received at one year, or as soon as they could manage to walk. The parents could not understand what he meant to do with them, but when they saw the improvement made in the tempers, the character, and happiness of the children, they were anxious to send them at any age, however young, at which they could be received.

In addition to the infant school, there was school accommodation for all under twelve years of age, after which, if their parents wished, they might enter the works, and contribute by their labour to the support of the family. To prevent any thought of charity in connection with the instruction they were receiving, the parents were charged threepence per month, or three shillings a year for each child. The actual expense of the establishment amounted to about two pounds a year for each child, and as there were three gradations, according to the age and acquirements of the children, the company paid the difference, and considered that they received ample value for the money thus expended, in the improved character of the young people. There was considerable choice of employment for children, when the working period of life arrived ; as, beside the various branches of the cotton manufacture, there were mechanics, iron and brass founders, forgers, turners in wood and iron, and builders in all branches, so that, without going outside the establishment, there was employment in these various trades, in repairs in the mills and the village, to the extent of eight thousand pounds a year.

Looking at the whole thing, we cannot regard his

self-congratulations as excessive, when he tells us in his autobiographical sketch that "all the houses in the village, with 150 acres of land around it, formed a part of an establishment, which united, and working together as one machine, proceeded day by day with the regularity of clockwork;" the effect of the whole being such, that Henry Hase, cashier for the Bank of England, when informed how long it had been going on, said that "it looked like the work of generations."

CHAPTER XII.

Education Struggle.

IT will be seen, from what has been said, that firmly determined as Robert Owen was that the people in the employment of the New Lanark Company should be educated, it was not because he was a man of "one idea," or because on that one point he had made up his mind to at all hazards carry out his plans. His thought extended to the workers in all the conditions of their lives. He had made human character a study, and was devoting his time and his means to the formation of an institution in connection with his works, the object of which was the cultivation of intelligence and morality in the minds of the workers. He had examined the effects of the factory system, so far as they were then perceptible; and had noted their influence on the health, the happiness, and morality of the people. By making himself acquainted, by practical work and by observation,

with the whole of the system in all its details, he was enabled to forecast the future, and to tell the world what the result of the wretched system the cotton manufacturers of the kingdom were developing and establishing would be. He was not declamatory or abusive. He did not, in any words he ever gave utterance to, denounce the manufacturers as selfish or wicked,—as men who were pursuing their own personal ends, though they knew that injury to the nation would follow. Before he spoke a word, he earned his right to speak, by practically experimenting on the points to which he meant to address himself. From almost the first years of his life as a manufacturer, the experience of every year, and a considerable portion of the gain of every year, were turned to account, in correcting the numerous evils which, in connection with factory labour, were visible everywhere around him.

His first great labour was that of education. He performed this in the best way he could when he first undertook the management of New Lanark. He noted, day by day, the effects produced with the limited means at his disposal, and he urged, as we have seen, on unwilling partners the necessity of doing much more. During this time his studies as well as his labours were incessant; not only was he battling with partners over the division of profits, and insisting that some fair portion should be used for the welfare of those whose labour had so materially helped to produce it, but he was studying the effects of education in religion, morals, general intelligence, language, and manners, as observable among the people of all nations as well as among those under

his care. The more he reflected on this subject, the more he became convinced of its paramount importance, and of the smallness of his own efforts in the limited sphere in which it was his lot to work. On this important subject Owen always laboured in a liberal and tolerant spirit. He believed that Lancaster's system of education was infinitesimal, compared with the requirements of the country. Lancaster had invented new and easy methods of elementary instruction, by which one man could as a teacher get through much more work than under the old system then prevailing. He sought to distribute such education as was then given to a portion of the workers more widely. Owen approved of this, but felt the necessity of greatly improving the character of the education given. He was a firm and liberal friend to Lancaster and had given a thousand pounds to help him in his work. Dr Bell's system was taken up by the Church in rivalry to Lancaster's. Bell's system excluded Dissenters; but, inasmuch as it meant the spread of intelligence by instruction, Owen expressed his willingness to help it, by giving another thousand pounds, if the committee would open the schools to children of all denominations; but only half that sum if they continued to exclude Dissenters. This proposal, he says, was debated two days in full committee, and ultimately it was decided by a small majority to continue the exclusion of all Dissenters, and to accept only the five hundred pounds. In recording this, he adds, "In twelve months after, I had the satisfaction to learn that the practice which I had advocated was adopted."

Towards the close of 1812 he published two "Essays

on the Formation of Character." The first of these deals simply with general principles, pointing out the power of adult man over infant man, and the easiness with which, by wise training, a good general character may be secured to all. He urges the importance of this truth, by reference to the actual evils that had arisen in consequence of its non-recognition by society; alluding, in illustration, to the large masses of people in Great Britain, principally belonging to the working classes, for whose education no provision whatever was made,—who in consequence had fallen into a state of misery and crime, and were by their ignorance and criminal tendencies afflicting and injuring society. It has been objected by persons opposed to Owen's views, that there was nothing new in the principle he laid down. This is quite true; but in putting it forth, he did not claim the credit of a discovery. He simply claimed that he had systematised a series of facts already discovered, and made them applicable to the highest uses of life; he had tested the principle he asserted by educating the children under his care, and had proved its truth and power. Having done so, he urged its application on the attention of society, not as a philosophical problem to be discussed, but as a pressing work in daily life upon which all thoughtful men should enter without loss of time. "The present essays," he remarks, "are not brought forward as mere matter of speculation, to amuse the idle visionary who thinks in his closet and never acts in the world, but to create universal activity, permeate society with a knowledge of its true interests, and direct the public mind to the most important object to which it can be directed,—

to a national proceeding for rationally forming the character of that immense mass of the population which is now allowed to be so formed as to fill the world with crimes." He calls attention to popular ignorance on the plea that, under a better and more universal system of education, "any character, from the best to the worst, from the most ignorant to the most enlightened, may be given to any community in the world at large, by the application of proper means, which means are, to a great extent, at the command and under the control of those who have influence in the affairs of men."

When he wrote his essays on the formation of character, he saw very clearly the evils he had to contend against. The degradation of the working classes was always present to him. He saw it in Manchester in its worst forms, deepening and spreading with the system that helped to produce it. He saw, in the law, religious exclusions,—the result of prejudices possible only with men among whom ignorance of human nature prevailed. In Great Britain, Dissenters were trammelled by civil restrictions, Roman Catholics were oppressed and degraded by exclusive and ignominious laws, while Jews were by the law as well as by public opinion regarded with dislike and distrust. Bad as such hatreds and oppressions were in England, they were worse elsewhere; for while the people of England only disliked and oppressed, in other countries—where religious differences were more marked, and where religious prejudices were more free to operate—there often occurred deeds of violence which were prompted by a spirit of the most bitter animosity.

Such things in every form, whether near or remote, horrified Robert Owen; and it was that a higher justice should come through a higher and better instruction, that he sought so earnestly to inculcate a belief in the soundness of his theory of the formation of character.

He said to all men, "You are the children of a common Father whom you worship under different names. In your relation to your common parent and to each other, you owe duties of love and help, which your ignorance and the antipathies springing from it deprive you of the power to perform. Where you ought to love, you hate; where you ought to help, you hinder. You persecute and injure each other, because your skins differ in colour; because your religious opinions and forms of worship are not the same; because you differ in language and habits; whereas, if you understood yourselves and knew each other, and possessed that knowledge of the laws of your being which you ought to possess, and which ought most easily to be impressed on your minds, you would understand that you do not create for yourselves one of the distinctions concerning which you quarrel. The colour of your skin, your religious opinions and forms of worship, your language and habits, have been given to you—not chosen by you. You are the slaves of one set of prejudices, and not of another, by no choice of your own. At your birth you had no preference for black, brown, or white. You had no choice as to what country you should be born into, to what creed your parents should belong; whether you should be a Bhuddist, a Mahomedan, a Christian, or a Jew; what language you should speak,

or what habits you should acquire. Your 'character is to be formed for you, not by you;' so that instead of blaming and hating, fighting with and killing each other, it will be your duty in the recognition of this great truth, palpable to all who will open their eyes and see, to find out what is truest and best in each of these differences, and to give by education such qualities as will tend to produce the highest and best results in the human race."

CHAPTER XIII.

Theory in Regard to the Importance of Education.

THE efforts made by Robert Owen on behalf of education, did not originate in, nor were they sustained by, humane or philanthropic impulses only. He had studied the subject carefully and deeply, and had come deliberately to the conclusion, that education for the development of the individual human creature, as well as for the safety and progress of society, was the highest and most important duty men could be called on to perform. He deplored the wicked waste of human faculty and human happiness going on daily and hourly around him, in consequence of the gross neglect of education. He was convinced that mere isolated efforts could be of little use in forwarding so important and so pressing a work; but he knew, at the same time, that where associative or national effort could not be secured, each individual

man was bound to do his best according to his opportunities; so that a true sense of duty might be awakened in the public mind, and that, when this was done, practical methods, tested by experiment, might be at hand to enable the public to carry forward effectively so important a work. The ordinary plan was to set up a small school somewhere in connection with the factory, and employ some old man or old woman to struggle as he or she could, enfeebled by age and ignorance, against the indisposition of the children to learn, wearied as they always were by the overwork of the factory.

Such education sometimes did a little good, but advancing life, with its hardships and temptations, soon undid what the schoolmaster or schoolmistress had done; leaving the lives of the factory population to flow on in the old channels, contaminated by the new evil influences of the factory system. It was Robert Owen's great desire to see the question of education taken up by the nation in the truest and most liberal spirit. He was impressed with the conviction that it was criminal, in a very high degree, to appropriate the wealth then rapidly accumulating, and the power it brought with it, to the creation of large private fortunes,—to the growth or to the exaltation of one class, by the oppression and degradation of another class. It was in this belief he commenced his labours in the cause of education, and it was because he felt deeply its importance to society, that he emphasised his views of the capabilities of man's nature, and the duty of instructing the young. "Every minute dies a man, every minute one is born." Owen saw in this old truth an awful signi-

ficance, by comparing the innocence at birth with the ignorance and depravity in life, and concluded that the best use of his own life and fortune lay in a prudent but earnest devotion of his time and means to the cause of education, more especially in connection with those in his employment.

The commencement of the educational effort at New Lanark was meant to be the foundation of a permanent work, founded on principles which were to be sustained by a growing national conviction. From the beginning, every point was carefully reasoned out; and though what Owen called the "fundamental facts," on which the "rational system of society" was to be based, were not published for years after his schools were opened, yet the ideas contained in these were frequently stated during the time he devoted to the work of education among the population of New Lanark, as well as in several documents published by him before he had taken any position as a leader among the people. These "fundamental facts" were briefly put. Possibly they might have been stated with greater clearness; still they were capable of being easily understood by the intelligent and candid, and beyond these Owen did not care to carry conviction.

1. Man is a compound being, whose character is formed of his constitution or organisation at birth, and of the effects of external circumstances acting upon that organisation from birth to death, such original organisation and external influences continually acting and reacting on each other.

2. Man is compelled by his original constitution to

receive his feelings and convictions independent of his will.

3. His feelings or his convictions, or both of them united, create the motive to action called the will, which stimulates him to act, and decides his actions.

4. The organisation of no two human beings is ever precisely similar at birth, nor can art subsequently form any two individuals from infancy to maturity to be the same.

5. Nevertheless, the constitution of every infant, except in case of organic disease, is capable of being formed or matured either into a very inferior or a very superior being, according to the qualities of the external circumstances allowed to influence that constitution from birth.

In the Scriptures, and out of them, among the philosophers and the divines, much may be read as to man's subjection to the forces of nature and society, but nobody else applied what had been said on the subject—in a very vague and fragmentary way — so systematically to the lives of men, or sought so earnestly to impress on others the necessity of accepting and acting on these truths, with a view to the promotion of charity and kindliness in thought and action among men. And his over-sanguineness in regard to the rapid consummation of the work he had taken in hand, did not arise from his belief in the newness of his facts or doctrines, so much as from his strong faith in the effect of such a system of instruction if zealously applied.

In his "Book of the New Moral World," published as late as 1836, there is a carefully prepared explana-

tion and defence of these propositions, which it may be necessary to notice further on. They are inserted here principally for the purpose of showing the grounds on which he proceeded, and the importance he attached to education, not merely as a means of fitting men and women for the performance of ordinary duties, but for the purpose of raising the whole level of life in its manhood and womanhood; beginning with infancy, and never ceasing, by a wise substitution of good for evil in its surroundings, to increase its moral and intellectual power, and to thus secure human progress by making the promotion of it an important part of the common everyday business of life.

CHAPTER XIV.

Better Prospects.

THE schools were now pushed forward and finished, and a head master and mistress chosen. It is stated, however, very distinctly, that they were not selected because they possessed any high degree of fitness through intellectual acquirements, so much as that they were noticeable for good temper, patience, and a strong love for children. They were prepared for their new duties by instruction in the subjects they had to teach. Infants above one year attended school under special care. They were never permitted to hear angry words spoken, or to be wearied by a teaching unsuited to their age or capacity. The

schoolroom was a place where they found pleasant companionship, kindly superintendence, and an instruction made agreeable by the mode in which it was conveyed. They were not unnecessarily troubled with books, or with the ordinary grind of the schoolroom. Their school hours were made enjoyable, and their instruction an interesting play time, passed under the supervision of persons who, by natural disposition and a strong sense of duty, sought to cultivate kindliness of character and manner, with as much, if not with more pains, than to instruct the mind according to the ordinary school routine. James Buchanan and Mary Young, the first master and mistress of the infant school, were informed, previous to entering on their duties, as to the intentions of the founder. They were never to speak angrily to, threaten, or beat a child. They were to instruct them, by word and action, how to make each other happy; a duty also carefully impressed on the minds of the older children in relation to the younger. The children were to be taught the nature and uses of common things by familiar conversation, and the teachers were to utilise opportunities to impart such lessons when the children's curiosity caused them to ask questions either in the playground or the schoolroom. There was also a large and pleasant play-room, used when the weather was unfavourable for out-door recreation. The schoolroom was well furnished with carefully painted transparencies of objects in natural history, framed so as to pass before the children on rollers. Large coloured maps of the best kind hung on the walls. On these maps, as Owen tells us, were delineated the usual national boundaries, but

that there were no names of countries, cities, or towns, the positions of these being indicated by smaller or larger circles. Around these maps the children, to the number of about one hundred and fifty, were grouped. A long wand was provided, by which the smallest child could reach to the highest point on the map. The lesson commenced by one of the children taking the wand, and when asked to do so by another, pointing to any particular country, city, mountain, or lake. In this way, he says, children when they arrived at six years of age became such adepts in geographical knowledge, that one of our admirals, who had visited most parts of the world, declared that he could not answer many of the questions to which the New Lanark children readily replied in his presence.

So efficacious was this kind of teaching, through the delight the children took in it, conducted as it was, that their progress caused surprise and pleasure to all who inspected the establishment, and the schools had not been long in operation before they were visited by men of all classes who took an interest in the education question. Teaching by book Robert Owen regarded as the least effectual method with young children, and he expresses an opinion that when the best means of instructing the young shall be known and applied, books will not be used with children under ten.

The schools for the more advanced in years and acquirements received equal attention, and the progress in knowledge, kindliness of temper, and good manners was most satisfactory. One feature is thus referred to :—" Those at two years of age and above had commenced dancing lessons, and those of four

years of age and upwards singing lessons, under good teachers. Both sexes were also drilled, and became efficient in the military exercises; being formed into divisions, led by young drummers and fifers, they were very expert and perfect in these exercises." Robert Owen gives in his own words an account of his proceedings. "The children," he says, "being always treated with kindness and confidence, and being altogether without fear, even of a harsh word from any of their numerous teachers, exhibited an unaffected grace and natural politeness which surprised and fascinated strangers. The conduct of the children was to most of the visitors so unaccountable, that they knew not how to express themselves, or how to hide their wonder and amazement. These children standing up, seventy couples at a time in the dancing-room, and often surrounded by many strangers, would with the utmost ease and natural grace, go through any of the dances of Europe with so little direction from their master, that the visitors would be unconscious that there was a dancing-master in the room. In their singing lessons, 150 would sing at the same time, their voices being trained to harmonise; and it was delightful to hear them sing the old popular Scotch songs, which were great favourites with most strangers, from the unaffected simplicity and hearty feeling with which they were sung. Their military exercises they went through with a precision, equal, as many officers of the army stated, to some regiments of the line, and at their head in their marchings were six and sometimes eight young fifers playing various marches. The girls were thus drilled and disciplined as well as the boys,

and their numbers were generally nearly equal. And it may be remarked, that being daily brought up together, they appeared to feel for and to treat each other as brothers and sisters; and so they continued until they left the day schools at the age of twelve."

The visitors who went to New Lanark, for the purpose of seeing the schools in operation, were very numerous. They arrived "not by hundreds, but by thousands annually." "I have seen," says Owen, "as many as seventy strangers at once attending the early morning exercises of the children in the school." Among these visitors were many of the first persons in the kingdom, as well as numbers of illustrious stangers. The Duke of Holstein (Oldenburgh) and his brother stayed several days with Owen at New Lanark, that they might thoroughly understand the machinery of the system of infant education established there; the Grand Duke Nicholas, afterwards Emperor of Russia; Prince John and Maximilian of Austria; many foreign ambassadors; among others, Baron Just, ambassador from Saxony, whose sovereign presented a gold medal to Robert Owen as a mark of approval.

When Owen visited London, and was residing in Bedford Square, at the house of Mr Walker, one of his partners, the Duke of Kent and his brother the Duke of Sussex paid him several visits. For many years the former was in close and constant communication with Owen on the subject of the reforms he was busy in projecting, not only in regard to popular education, but in connection with the condition of the people generally. So strong was the approval of what he was doing, that the friends of

education in London, among whom was Henry Brougham, afterwards Lord Brougham, sought to establish schools of the same character, and obtained the assistance of Owen's infant-school master to that end; but this attempt was not a success, as allowance had not been made for the many differences between the child-life of New Lanark and that of an overcrowded and demoralised metropolitan district.

As may be seen by the encouragement and support he gave to Lancaster and Bell, Owen was in favour of any effort that could be made for education. He was convinced that no labour in such a cause could be thoroughly effective, that did not, as far as possible, remove the evil example of the old from before the eyes of the young, and shut out the contaminations of their language and manners. The instruction of the school he regarded as but one of many agencies, the success of which did not depend altogether on the plan of teaching or the things taught, the counteracting influences of the home and the street powerfully affecting the result of such instruction. What Owen really thought on this part of the subject, may be gathered from a speech delivered by him when presiding at a public dinner given to Joseph Lancaster, in Glasgow, in 1812. Speaking of the plans of Lancaster, he said,—"By education, I now mean the instruction of all kinds which we receive from our earliest infancy until our characters are generally fixed and established. It is, however, necessary that the value of this object should be considered, as well as the means of putting it into execution. Much has been said and written in relation to education, but few persons are yet aware of its real importance in

society, and certainly it has not acquired that prominent rank in our estimation which it deserves, for, when duly investigated, it will be found to be, so far at least as depends on our operations, the primary source of all the good and evil, misery and happiness, which exist in the world. Let us," he continues, "observe the different appearances bodily and mentally which the inhabitants of the various regions of the earth present. Are they inherited in our nature, or do they arise from the respective soils on which we are born? Evidently from neither. They are wholly and solely the effects of that education I have described. Man becomes a wild ferocious savage, a cannibal, or a highly civilised and benevolent being, according to the circumstances in which he may be placed from his birth."

Pursuing and illustrating the subject in hand, he sought to impress on the gentlemen present the fact "that if any given number of children were exchanged at birth between the Society of Friends, of which our worthy guest, Joseph Lancaster, is a member, and the loose fraternity of St Giles in London, the children of the former would grow up like the members of the latter, prepared for every degree of crime, while those of the latter would become the same temperate, good, moral characters as the former. Let us," he proceeds, "take every means in our power to interest all those who have any weight or influence in the city, to enter heartily into the support and extension of the Lancasterian system of education for the poor, until every child of that class shall find a place in one of the schools. The schools which will contain the younger children in the day time will likewise serve for even-

ing and Sunday schools, at which times those who may be past the proper age for the first, and strangers that come amongst us, may be instructed. But," he continues, "it will be almost in vain to well educate the few, if they are to spend the greater part of their time among the ignorant and the vicious many. The manners and habits of the latter will counteract our good intentions to the former."

At the commencement of his public life he was very desirous to obtain the co-operation of his brother manufacturers, and for this purpose he appealed to them in a document prefixed to his third "Essay on the Formation of Character," and addressed to "The superintendents of manufactories, and those individuals generally, who, by giving employment to an aggregated population, may easily adopt the means to form the sentiments and manners of such a population." In this address he says,—"Many of you have long experienced in your manufacturing operations the advantage of substantial, well contrived, and well executed machinery. Experience has also shown you the difference of the results between mechanism which is neat, clean, well arranged, and always in a high state of repair, and that which is allowed to be dirty, in disorder, without the means of preventing unnecessary friction, and which therefore becomes and works much out of repair. In the first case, the whole economy and management are good, every operation proceeds with ease, order, and success; in the last, the reverse must follow, and a scene be presented of counteraction, confusion, and dissatisfaction among all the agents and instruments interested or occupied in the general process, which cannot fail to create great loss. If, then, due care as

to the state of your inanimate machines can produce such beneficial results, what may not be expected if you devote equal attention to your vital machines, which are far more wonderfully constructed? When you shall acquire a right knowledge of these, of their curious mechanism, of their self-adjusting powers, when the proper mainspring shall be applied to their varied movements, you will become conscious of their real value, and you will readily be induced to turn your thoughts more frequently from your inanimate to your living machines. You will discover that the latter may be easily trained and directed to procure a large increase of pecuniary gain, while you may also derive from them high and substantial gratification. Will you, then, continue to expend large sums of money to procure the best devised mechanism of wood, brass, or iron, and to retain it in perfect repair,—to provide the best substance for the prevention of unnecessary friction, and to save it from falling into premature decay? Will you also devote years of intense application to understand the connection of the various parts of these lifeless machines, to improve their effective powers, and to calculate with mathematical precision all their minute and combined movements? And when, in these transactions, you estimate time by minutes, and the money expended for the chance of increased gain by fractions, will you not afford some of your attention to consider whether a portion of your time and capital would not be more advantageously applied to improve your living machines? From experience that cannot deceive me, I venture to assure you that your time and money so applied, if directed by a true knowledge of the subject, would

return you not 5, or 10, or 20 per cent. for your capital so expended, but often 50 and in many cases 100 per cent."

CHAPTER XV.

Importance of his Work at New Lanark.

ROBERT OWEN knew by experience the degraded condition of the people employed in the cotton factories, and he felt that the longer such a state of things was permitted to continue, the more difficult it would become to lift them out of that condition. His exertions aroused the active opposition of a large section of the factory owners. Whilst Owen was in London fighting the Factory Bill before a Parliamentary committee, the employers were compelled to give time and trouble in resisting the proposed legislation, and in endeavouring to discredit those who were fighting resolutely to forward it. One of the methods used was to awaken public distrust and hatred, by attacking on religious grounds the system pursued by Owen at New Lanark; and so far did they proceed in this direction, that watch was set over Owen by means of the clergyman belonging to the parish. This was carried so far, that Mr Menzies, the minister employed for this purpose, was taken to London by the manufacturers' committee; but no attempt was made to prove anything against Owen, though whispers as to his infidelity in religion, and the dangerous nature of his proceedings generally, were beginning to circulate.

The moral and intellectual elevation of the masses

of the working people still continued, after the close of the French war, to be regarded as a serious political danger; and though liberal men of enlightened minds were friendly to popular progress, so saturated was the public mind with terror of a dreaded democracy, that reform of any kind lay open to the chance of being denounced as the carrying out of covert designs to upset the throne, attack property, and subvert religion. What Owen's attitude was at this moment has been fully explained by himself in many documents extensively circulated. No man was less reticent. In regard to his ideas on religious and social subjects, he had no concealments of thought or policy. On these points, nevertheless, it may be better that others should speak for him. He was not a controversialist in the ordinary meaning of the term,—more truly might he be called an experimentalist. Had his first attempts to organise a useful system of education failed, the probability is that he would have confined himself more exclusively to his duties as a mere manufacturer, and in the ordinary way enlarged the pecuniary gains of himself and his partners; aiding, most likely with a liberal hand, whoever might be promoting the instruction of the young. He was successful, however, beyond his most sanguine expectations, and therefore he was determined to push forward and complete an experiment promising so much good as an example to others.

There is every reason to believe that Owen's last set of partners felt thoroughly satisfied with his management as a mere employer of labour and maker of profit. The profit realised was more than the deed of partnership asked for, and the condition

of the works and the people employed was all that could be desired. The celebrated Jeremy Bentham was one of the partners, and his well-known liberality of mind removed any suspicion that he would interfere with the working of the establishment because the orthodoxy of Owen was suspected. The schools had gone on improving and developing, and the results, shown by the improvement of the people from day to day, became more evident.

From 1816 to 1822 they had attracted so much notice, that his general plan of dealing with the population of his village was regarded as suited to the general condition of society, especially as applied to the poor of the kingdom. Pauperism just then was rapidly increasing, while on all hands discontented workers were threatening the peace and safety of the kingdom. The British and Foreign Philanthropic Society was organised principally for the purpose of trying Owen's plans; but though at the first general meeting subscriptions to the extent of £55,000 were announced, practical operations could not be undertaken, with any fair chance of success, unless a much larger sum was subscribed; and as by this time, and soon after, a very widespread suspicion of the heterodoxy of his opinions was spread abroad, the more timid took flight. When the meeting took place, the first whispers of alarm only were heard. The list of vice-presidents contained ten names of ambassadors and foreign ministers, while the acting committee included those of no fewer than fifteen members of Parliament. This first general meeting was held in the Freemason's Hall, Great Queen Street, London, on the 1st of June 1822,—Viscount Torrington in the

chair. The report, read to the meeting by the Earl of Blessington, contains an outline of the plans and proceedings of the association; and in this report, and in the speeches that followed, the highest praise is bestowed on Robert Owen, his character, and his labour. "The committee," says the report, "have been favoured with the most liberal communications from Robert Owen, Esq., of New Lanark, in whose humane and enlightened mind originated the plans which have since (under his prudent management) been brought into successful practice; and to whose benevolence, public spirit, and practical knowledge, the public are indebted for the most valuable collection of facts and successful experiments that have ever been attended to in the cause of suffering humanity. They would therefore consider it a dereliction of duty not to confess the high sense they entertain of Mr Owen's intelligence, candour, and obliging courtesy, in submitting all his plans to their most scrutinising examination." James Maxwell, M.P., in seconding the adoption of the report moved by the Earl of Blessington, said, "I have seen sufficient of the plan proposed by my friend Mr Owen, to know that there are means by which a great deal of the vice and the miseries of the lower orders may be removed. Giving rational education, and accompanying that education with the Bible, must promote the great and important interests of society; while it holds out the prospect which leads to the attainment of happiness hereafter, it makes active virtue the road by which alone it can be approached. Mr Owen, for a great length of time, has devoted his attention to the state of the working classes, by which he has considerably promoted their

comfort and happiness. He has formed good habits even in children, by moral and religious instruction."

Sir W. de Crispigny, M.P., said that when he first heard of Mr Owen's plans, he looked on them as visionary; but reflecting on the amount of good that must result from them, if practicable, he took a journey into Scotland, and visited Mr Owen. "I examined everything, both when he was with me and when he was not with me. The latter method I adopted, to see how the plan proceeded at a time when no one was expected to examine it, and to discover if I could possibly find any trippings. First, I saw little children a year-and-a-half old, some a little older, in a sort of playground,—but with a degree of harmlessness, of fondness, and of attention to each other, which we do not often witness in this country; thus proving that an attention to their education, in this early period of life, tends to form the salutary habits which will hereafter grow up to maturity. I went on, and observed another set learning to read. I saw them reading the Bible,—that book designed and calculated to impress them with their duty to God and man, and to produce all those results which lead to present and future happiness. Here, then, is the best fruit, and the strongest recommendation of our cause. On the Sunday I attended their services. There are different places of worship which they frequent. Near them is the orthodox church. The Dissenters and Methodists have one or two places, and some other denominations. But I never saw more propriety, good conduct, and devotion, in any place, and I wish to God I could always see such in this country."

Lord Torrington, on leaving the chair, said, " I had long heard a great deal of New Lanark, I therefore took an opportunity of visiting that far-celebrated place, and nothing has been to-day stated respecting it that is not confirmed by my own knowledge, or to which I do not wholly agree. No language can do justice to the excellence of the arrangements in that establishment. At New Lanark Mr Owen has frequently a meeting of from 1,000 to 1,200 persons, 800 of them are from sixteen to twenty years of age, all uniting in friendly conversation, accompanied by some instrumental music. I stole out about a quarter of an hour before the meeting broke up, to see if I could not discover a little irregularity among so many young people; but their conduct was that of friendship and brotherly regard, and in ten minutes every individual was in his house with order and regularity. In my walks about the establishment I requested Mr Owen not to attend me, that I might judge for myself; and I am convinced that whoever has seen what I have seen, can have no doubt as to the excellence of the plan, and must be a hearty supporter of the measures we have this day met to promote."

In fact, nothing could be more complete than the success of New Lanark; and Robert Owen, in speaking of it in after-years, though he insisted on the necessity of kindly and generous treatment for the adult workers in connection with their employment,—indeed, for the old and the young at all times and under all circumstances,—yet his master-belief was, that the careful and kindly education of the young was the truest foundation for a good and useful life, and the best safeguard for the peace and welfare of society.

His village, during his efforts in the cause of education, consisted of from 2,500 to 3,000 persons of all ages. An American traveller (Mr Griscom) who stayed some time at New Lanark, sums up his conclusions in the following words:—"There is not, I apprehend, to be found in any part of the world a manufacturing village in which so much order, good government, tranquillity, and rational happiness prevail." Another visitor of some importance was Dr Macnab, physician to the Duke of Kent, who went by the desire of His Royal Highness to inspect and report on the condition of the establishment. His report has been published; but there is only space to say here, that his praise of Owen's general management is unbounded, particularly in regard to the education of the young.

To give a correct idea of what Owen effected at New Lanark, it would be necessary to furnish a contrast by describing the ordinary factory establishment to be found at that time in the cotton districts of Lancashire and Cheshire. In these districts there was often, among certain of the employers, an entire neglect of everything but mere money-making, and the consequence was a state of life and morals unfit to be referred to except in general terms,—ignorance, immorality, crime, and physical deterioration. In New Lanark, there was recognition of the capabilities of the human creature, and the duty of developing these by a careful culture; of devoting a portion of the profits made by the business in which the people were engaged to the education of their children and the improvement of their lives, intellectually, morally, and socially.

The importance of Owen's work at New Lanark

was not in the improvement he made in the children by education, or in the condition of their parents by general good treatment, taken as the final result, so much as in the fact that he had commenced and carried on his operations at what may be called the opening of our huge system of cotton manufacturing, when, through indifference and neglect on the part of the manufacturers, the worst and most deplorable consequences had begun to show themselves. At such a time efforts like those of Owen were specially needed. And as he had proved not their practicability alone, but their economy in a business point of view, his example, had it been continued, might have spared the nation, in connection with this one great branch of its industry, the shame of the physical and moral degradation by which it has been attended, as well as the serious loss and deep humiliation resulting from the ignorance and vice of the people. The "cry of the children" was not unheard by Owen, nor unattended to; and what is more, as an earnest labourer on their behalf, that which he did was well planned, and so wisely carried out, that the results were an astonishment to all who examined them.

The story as to how the New Lanark experiment was brought to an end is rather disheartening, as it shows how good men with excellent intentions may defeat the best efforts, through defects of character which, though regarded as virtues, yet produce results much the same as vices. Just at the time when Owen had won the approval of large numbers of the most influential people, and when outside inquiry and effort were making known and aiding in the promul-

gation of his ideas, the narrow fanaticism he so much condemned began to operate actively against him, and from such a quarter that it was out of his power to guard himself against it, unless by going through another process of breaking up and reconstructing, which, after what he had already passed through, would have been too much to expect.

CHAPTER XVI.

William Allen.

AMONG the last set of Owen's partners the most active was William Allen. He was a member of the Society of Friends, and a very conscientious and well-intentioned man, but to all appearances full of the vanity of piety, being narrow in his views and vexatiously aggressive in small matters. This is certainly the impression left by a perusal of his "Life and Selections from His Correspondence." He visited St Petersburg in 1819, and was invited to dinner, in company with two or three of his friends, by the Minister of the Interior, Waradaveloff, and he solemnly writes,—"We were treated with the most marked respect, and I had to hand the Princess Troobelskoy into the dining-room. Such conspicuous positions are very trying to me, but I endeavour to put the very best face upon the matter, and must acknowledge that hitherto I have been favoured to acquit myself upon all trying occasions in a manner which has offered peace in the retrospect." Prospectively or retrospectively,

taking a lady to the dinner-table does not seem to be a matter a sensible man would trouble himself to write about or think of after the lady had taken her seat. During the same visit to St Petersburg he writes,—"After tea, dear Stephen and I sat down together, and had a precious season of religious retirement. My petitions were mentally put up to the Lord that He would be pleased to look down upon His two poor solitary servants, wandering over the face of His earth; and my mind was so filled with divine good that I was ready to say, 'It is enough.' We were sweetly refreshed together." This kind of self-consciousness cannot be made subject of reproof or of ridicule, but it is pretty clear that the man who is troubled with it can scarcely be regarded as an agreeable or profitable fellow-worker where there is not conformity of opinion, and between William Allen and Robert Owen this did not exist.

From the first he regarded Owen with suspicion; while there can be no doubt Owen was on the lookout for trouble from a partner whose judgment it was impossible he could respect, and whose opportunities to interfere with his educational efforts he knew would be frequent. Owen's mind was vigorous and courageous. He was decidedly in favour of allowing truth and falsehood to fight their battle out fairly, and therefore encouraged general reading, music, singing, and dancing; and would have laughed at an admonition to be found in the first volume of William Allen's "Life and Correspondence," and given to a young Frenchman under his care, "Be careful not to read books of an immoral tendency, as novels, romances, &c., and endeavour to discourage it in others; they

are poison to the mind." A man of this kind beginning to labour with Owen was no doubt entitled to exercise circumspection, but Mr Allen went much further than this. In his "Life," &c., we find these entries:—"Ninth month. Attending the committee of the Borough Road. Also a conference with some of the partners of Owen. Robert Owen is in town, and I am much distressed about him. He has blazoned abroad his infidel principles in all the public newspapers, and he wishes to identify me with his plans, which I have resisted in the most positive manner. I am resolved not to remain in the concern of New Lanark, unless it be most narrowly and constantly watched by some one on whom we can thoroughly rely." Again, same month:—"I had a conference with Lord Sidmouth, and stated to him how much we held in abhorrence the principles of Robert Owen."

The best reply to so unfounded an accusation is that one year and eleven months after this "blazoning" of infidel opinions in all the public newspapers, the committee appointed to report on Mr Owen's plan, under the presidency of the Duke of Kent, and including the names of the Duke of Sussex, Sir Robert Peel, M.P., David Ricardo, M.P., Matthew Wood, M.P., Sir W. C. De Crispigny, M.P., W. A. Mackinnon, M.P., John Smith, M.P., besides twenty-nine other names of the highest respectability, treat this particular charge in the following way:—"The committee are aware of many objections which have been urged against Mr Owen's system, but none of those stated have appeared to them as founded in reason or in fact. The private opinions which Mr Owen has been supposed

to entertain on matters of religion form one of such objections. This is a point on which it has not been thought fit to require Mr Owen to make any public declaration, it is deemed sufficient to have ascertained that Mr Owen is not known to have in any one instance endeavoured to alter the religious opinions of persons in his employment; that the desires of his workmen to attend their respective places of worship are complied with, and aided to the utmost extent; that a minister has long been paid by the proprietors of the manufactory under Mr Owen's management for performing divine service in the Gaelic tongue to the Highland workmen; that Mr Owen's own house is a house of daily prayer; that he is the father of a large, well-regulated, moral family; that his conduct appears to be free from reproach; and that his character is distinguished by active benevolence, perfect sincerity, and undisturbed tranquillity of temper."

Sufficient as this may be considered for sensible and fair-minded men of the world, it was not enough for the person who could write of novels and romances, &c.,—including, most likely, the works of Shakespeare, —as of "immoral tendency," and as being "poison to the mind." On the 20th of April 1818, William Allen writes as follows:—"This has been a trying week, as I have had deep exercise of mind on account of Robert Owen's infidel principles. I have sustained many disputes with him." On May the 6th, the same year, he writes that he asked Mrs Owen whether the workpeople at New Lanark would meet the London proprietors, three of whom were then at Lanark. Mrs Owen at once said they would be quite ready; and when Owen met William Allen at dinner he

asked him if they were disposed to have a meeting. "I told him that I did feel inclined to meet the people, but it was only fair to state that if I did, I could not answer for what I might say to them. I added that I should certainly prepare nothing beforehand, though since he had addressed them on his principles, I might feel it right to state what were ours. He immediately said, 'Will to-morrow evening do?' I assented; and in the kindest manner he said that notice should be given to all the village." This meeting went off very well, but a curious incident in connection with it was the presentation of a written address by the people of the village to the three London partners, containing the following words:—"We, the inhabitants of New Lanark, beg to address ourselves to you as part proprietors of the establishment, on your appearance amongst us. We are fully aware, gentlemen, that although your other pursuits may prevent your continued residence in the village, yet, whatever tends to add to our comfort or render our circumstances easier will meet with your approbation, and, in this view, we regard it as not unnecessary to thank you, thus publicly, for the many advantages we enjoy through your co-operation with Mr Owen, and the other partners in the concern. The care that is taken in gratuitously educating our children, and the humane treatment we experience under the persons to whom is committed the management of the various departments, are advantages that call forth our earnest expressions of gratitude. We are sensible that our circumstances are much superior to those of all other cotton-spinners, and it is our desire by a steady attention to our various duties

to merit a continuance of the kindness we now experience. We hope the interest you have taken (in conjunction with the other proprietors) in the Bill now pending in Parliament, having for its object to place others of the labouring class in some degree on a footing with ourselves, will be rewarded by your seeing it pass into law. We conclude by expressing our desire that all cotton-spinners may enjoy the same advantages as we do; then would the masters feel the superior gratification arising from possessing the affections of a well-treated and happy people, and their servants that pleasure which a continued kind attention on the part of the master is calculated to afford. With much respect, gentlemen, we sign ourselves in the name and by the request of the inhabitants of New Lanark." (Here follow eight signatures.)

There is only one paragraph omitted from this remarkable address, but this is for no reason beyond mere condensation. In the first volume, page 348, of Allen's "Life," the substance of a long reply by Mr Allen to this address is given. It speaks of the pleasure felt by himself and the other partners in seconding and supporting their "benevolent friend, Robert Owen, in those judicious and enlightened plans" devised by him for the temporal comfort of the people, "and prosecuted with so much success." "Woeful experience in other places has shown, that to endeavour to extract the greatest quantity of profit from such a concern at the expense of the health and comfort of those employed in it, is a policy at once short-sighted and cruel, and calculated eventually to lead to results baneful to society at large and highly dangerous to the State." There is following

this some three pages of the ordinary religious exhortation, very good, but not very applicable to the community to which they were addressed. The language addressed by the New Lanark workers to their employers, and by Mr Allen to them, furnishes ample proof that the relations existing between the employers and the employed were as good as could be, that this was owing to the kindness and intelligent management of Robert Owen, and that in his teaching nothing had been done to awaken even the slightest suspicion on the part of the parents that the minds of the children were being unfairly tampered with.

On the day these proceedings took place, we find the following from the hand of the pious Quaker partner:—"Joseph Foster and I took a walk to Old Lanark to see the minister there, and inquire into the moral state of the people of the mills. He said he was not aware of any case of drunkenness for a year or two past, and he did not think that Owen's principles took any root among the population. We then went to another of their ministers; he gave us a very good account of the morals of the people at the mills, and I find that he visits them often. He seemed heartily glad to hear our sentiments on the subject of the Scriptures, &c., and we urged him to visit the schools and see that they were taught there, and also to correspond with us if he saw any attempt made to introduce anything contrary to revealed religion." Clearly, the man who could set up a secret supervision of this kind could scarcely be regarded as a desirable fellow-worker, notwithstanding the piety of his character or the purity of his intentions.

No opportunity of interference was neglected from

the moment William Allen first began meddling with the school arrangements at New Lanark, until Robert Owen hopelessly abandoned the attempt to persevere, thwarted as he was by the sickly and persevering piety of his Quaker partner. In the January of 1824 Allen succeeded in forcing on the schools a master from London, no doubt properly instructed as to the changes to be made. He says in regard to this :—" My mind was much relieved ; I believe that through the whole of this trying and exercising business divine support has been near. Though the family are very kind, yet the one thing is wanting." In parting from the two young Owens, he tells his readers that he " reminded them that the time would come to each of them when they would find that religion was no fiction but a solemn reality." Even with this sort of unctuous vanity, when he believed it to be well meant, Robert Owen was not the man to quarrel. " I now feel peaceful," Mr Allen exclaimed ; but it may be taken for granted that Owen, who had given so many years of his life to the organisation of the Lanark schools, and to the promotion of the welfare of the inhabitants, felt anything rather than peaceful and happy in the thought of a life's work being rendered of little or no avail by a fanatical imbecility, to have striven against which would have only wasted his time and his energies. William Allen, however, was not satisfied with an absolute non-interference with the liberty of religious teaching, and the charity attending it, though the people were well-behaved and kindly in their lives, and Owen, by his plans and labours, had succeeded in making those under his charge exceptionally virtuous and happy.

The general statements in William Allen's "Life and Correspondence" give no idea of the true character of his opposition to Owen. When he speaks of "proper" education, he means simply what he, in his extreme sanctimoniousness, deemed to be "proper;" and what this might be with a person who regarded novels and romances as immoral and poisonous books, it is not difficult to imagine. The points on which he took his stand, when he had finally made up his mind to finish the educational work that had answered so admirably in Owen's hands, were dancing, singing, drilling, and the use of the Highland costume. These, in his eyes, were all exceedingly improper; they poisoned the mind with lightness and vanity, with a taste for military display, and, it might be, the glory of the battlefield; whilst the naked legs of the children so shocked his sense of propriety, and foreshadowed so much of immorality in after-life, that his stand against the New Lanark schools was final and successful. The schools went on for several years after, and, as long as Owen remained, without their efficiency being lessened, but there was no hearty co-operation from the London partners. William Allen writes to Owen after the visit in 1822, when he had made his mind up to have his own way:—"I yesterday received thy reply to my letter announcing our safe return to London. That reply awakened afresh all the sympathy which I have ever felt for the benevolent part of thy character. Sorry indeed am I to see that our principles are diametrically opposite; and may that Great and Holy Being, who seeth not as man sees, so influence thy heart, before the shadows of the evening close upon thee, that it may become

softened and receive those impressions which He alone can give; then thou wilt perceive that there is indeed something infinitely beyond human reason, and which human reason alone can never comprehend, though in itself perfectly reasonable. *At present*, however, it is quite plain to me that *we must part*."

The assumption of personal superiority in such passages as this, coupled with a rejection of reason as regulating human duty, could not but make a most painful impression on the mind of Owen; and when he saw that the other London partners countenanced Allen's proceedings, the necessity of parting must have been as obvious to his mind as to that of the London Quaker. The two previous dissolutions of partnership in connection with the treatment of the people at New Lanark, leave no doubt of Robert Owen's thorough earnestness, and his determination to make the happiness of the workers' lives an important part of his duty. This to him was a supreme obligation, and he frequently states his reasons for so considering it. With him to think a truth was to act it, leaving the mere talk to others. His Lanark experiment was an attempt to carry into practice what he felt to be a pressing necessity, not only in the interest of Great Britain, but in the interest of the masses of the people in every part of the world. He had in early life adopted the idea, that a greatly improved state of existence in connection with the manufactures of the country was realisable; and when the opportunity offered he realised it, not without labour and sacrifice. The merest conception of the misery produced by our factory system in other parts of the country, compared with the state of things created by

him in New Lanark, is the best proof that he was a practical as well as benevolent man, who knew how to carry out, on the spot where he stood, the work which he believed to be practical, and necessary for the well-being of his fellow-creatures.

CHAPTER XVII.

Driven Out.

OWEN was not a dreamer, nor was he given to crude experimenting, as is constantly alleged. The manner in which he struggled for education for the young, and the principles he asserted as the necessary basis of all instruction, when taken in connection with the class he had to deal with, show him to have been in this field of human duty a man of exceptional intelligence, benevolence, and perseverance, ready to give reasons for what he did, and realising, if not his highest ideal, large and satisfactory results in proof of the soundness of his theories.

He insisted on the general truth, that the infant from its birth might be trained to good, or so mismanaged or neglected as to give the worst intellectual and moral results. In proof of this last assertion, he adduced facts which were apparent to all save those who were blind to them through self-interest. He had rigorously shut out from his mind the then common belief, that boys and girls belonging to the working classes should be educated solely with a view to fitting them for the ordinary tasks they were

to perform in after-life; that they should be made imperfect tools, available for the convenience or profit of others, without any knowledge as to the higher aspects or nobler duties of human life ; to do with docility the work of the shoemaker, the tailor, the spinner, or the weaver, without a single aspiration in connection with a manhood or womanhood, that was but too frequently either partially or wholly obliterated by this unjust and shortsighted process.

His aim was to show in the carrying out of the system he adopted at New Lanark, that education added to the value of the workman ; whereas a child brought up in ignorance, it may be by bad example habituated to crime, was a burden to itself, and a serious obstruction to the happiness of the general community; and, beyond this, the cause of an enormous outlay for criminal correction and punishment, to say nothing of a huge pauper system that called, without ever ceasing, for the expenditure of annual millions of money. On the face of it, the losses by educational neglect were heavier than the cost of a sound system of education could be, especially if the more indirect and less immediate losses of neglect and bad example were taken into account. Throughout his published writings and his spoken addresses these ideas were continually put forth and insisted on, with a view to the promotion of educational effort in the country, that every human creature brought into existence might be so treated from infancy as to become in after-life an addition to the happiness instead of to the misery of the world.

Owen regarded as a duty not only to utilise the best means of education, but also to remove injurious example, and to prevent evil association. He exclaimed against the useless, and as he regarded it the vindictive, punishment of the rod, the prison, the transport colony, the gallows. Though he had his own special ideas in regard to education, and to the manner in which it should be carried out, he hailed it apart from these as the great safeguard to national progress. No labour was too heavy for him to incur, no expense too great, no patience too prolonged; and though the thoughtless and censorious spoke of him as a fanatic, a monomaniac, a man of one idea, and a disturber of society, such terms were, when applied to him, in the highest degree undeserved, seeing that in all he said and did he contemplated nothing beyond a peaceful and equitable adjustment of every human interest.

One set of unfriendly critics cry out that a man who sets his heart on one great general purpose, however varied and numerous the objects it may include, is narrow and blind; whilst another set is, at the same moment, charging him with presumption, because, as they say, he imagines himself capable of knowing how to cure the full sum total of the world's ills. Owen could not justly be placed in either class; though Bastiat classes him with those who say, "From the days of Adam to our time the human race have been upon a wrong course, and, if only a little confidence is placed in me, I shall soon bring them back to the right way."

In any project that may be mooted in regard to

education, or any branch of social and industrial reform, Owen, or any other projector, may be mistaken in what he recommends; but when Bastiat sets up millions of men against individuals as proof by numbers that a new proposition must be wrong, or assumes the absurdity of a too comprehensive purpose, he forgets that in the beginning nearly every plan of reform appears altogether inadequate to the object in view, but that every day is a day of change during which the new is substituted for the old. Alteration at some point is always going on, and is, when wisely made, the great moving power of the world, moderating the hostilities and antagonisms of men, and reconciling their interests in a spirit of equity and peace.

When Owen decided to leave New Lanark, he felt the necessity of obtaining, if possible, so much conviction in the public mind as to the necessity for popular education as would neutralise the mischievous bigotry by which his own efforts were foiled. At that time what we now call public opinion was not a recognised force in influencing the action of the State. There was a public opinion belonging to certain great families, and to the wealthy and influential classes, to which our rival political parties attended. But that general intelligence among the masses of the population,—that unity of thought and general acceptance of common ideas diffused by popular newspapers, and hardened into conviction by the discussions of the factory and workshop, was then almost non-existent. Men with special ideas, like those entertained by Owen, felt how little could be done once it was clearly understood that the general improvement of

the working classes was intended, especially when this improvement included the abolition of prejudices clung to by those who are called the respectable classes, as necessary to the maintenance of religious belief, and to that respect for property which was regarded as even more important.

The great wars arising out of the French Revolution had not long been closed. The suppression of thought and prevention of combined action on the part of the masses were so vigorously carried out during that time, that it left the people without habits of thoughtfulness on public matters, and, as a consequence, without the discipline or the power of acting together, except secretly and as conspirators. After the war, distress was deeply felt, through the cessation of an extensive war demand, and the sudden influx of a discharged soldiery into the fields of industrial occupation.

At this period, also, a new difficulty made itself felt. An enlarged application of machinery for productive purposes had been going on for some time, and for several years after the close of the war was displacing hand labour, thus causing distress, before it had opened up for the increased production outlets that ultimately called into activity the superabundant labour of the country. Machine breaking became common in several of the manufacturing districts, and a widespread fear of the working classes was extensively and deeply felt. The Government contributed its share to the public dread of thought, speech, and action on the part of the people, by suppressing associations, of whatever character, by the operation of the combination laws. There was

a fear of popular tumults on one side, suffering and dissatisfaction on the other, and little or no opportunity of saying a word or suggesting a plan of action, with a view to any thoughtful proposal or method of reform that might calm men's passions, restore their confidence in each other, and reconcile their interests on grounds of mutual advantage.

The position of Robert Owen was, in this state of things, a very difficult one. There was no common thought upon which the different classes of the community could be brought together, no generally entertained hope that could bind them one to another for common action, and hence Owen had to set to work in the best way open to him. He saw and explained to his brother manufacturers, and to the propertied classes, the dangers by which they were surrounded; pointed the way out of these, and worked hard that the practicability of his plans might be understood. He thus drew round him a large number of influential people, that, by an influence extending downwards, public opinion might be widened, until the masses of the working people were drawn into a great national movement. Unfortunately, the greater number of those above the workers, with the great middle class as a centre, suspected and hated popular movements; and the crude state of public opinion at this time, combined with the suffering among the workers, would most likely have rendered dangerous any great popular movement.

Owen felt this so strongly, that, from the first, wherever his voice was heard, one of his most frequent and impressive lessons was, that whatever wrong or suffering existed amongst the people was

due to a defective system of society for which no individual was to blame, and not to the personal action of particular men; that, therefore, wise thought and judicious action, not anger, were absolutely necessary before the evils of society could be remedied; that the violent appropriation of what belonged to others would only be the substitution of one wrong for another, and that this meant a ceaseless anarchy, that carried in it no germ of promise, no solid foundation of hope.

Nothing was more easy than to misrepresent his teaching, by distorting the reforms at which he aimed, and falsifying the means proposed by him. His opponents represented him as a revolutionist; but of all those who laboured to accomplish needful changes, there were none who regarded with more horror anger and violence as the means of attaining even the best objects; for the reason, that he was convinced that movements begun in such a spirit were animated neither by the thought nor temper to propose the best remedies, or to pursue the best methods, for the accomplishment of good ends.

It was in this spirit he worked at New Lanark, so long as he was permitted to do so; and when he was interfered with and forced to retire, he determined to appeal to public opinion, that he might, by the support derived from it, demonstrate how much could be done for the improvement of the masses of the people. Nine years before he quitted New Lanark the Duke of Kent referred to the position of Owen, at a meeting held to investigate and report on his proposals. On 26th June 1819, His Royal Highness said:—"Conjectural reports respecting Mr

Owen's religious opinions have been much abroad; but it appears from the testimony of the same parties, and indeed of all who have visited New Lanark, that it has been Mr Owen's uniform practice through life to give every facility to the free performance of religious duties; but he has always inculcated the superior advantages which arise from introducing into the everyday practice of each individual of every persuasion the genuine spirit of charity, and this recommendation is now actively operative in the conduct of the members of each sect to the others. In consequence of this wise proceeding, religious animosity does not exist, while every benevolent feeling more abounds, and a cordial harmony, not known in any other situation in which there is a variety of religious persuasions, is seen to prevail in this little colony. If I understand Mr Owen's principles, they lead them not to interfere to the injury of any sect; but he claims for himself that which he is so desirous to obtain for his fellow-creatures,—religious liberty and freedom of conscience; and this he contends for, because his experience compels him to conclude that these principles are now necessary to secure the well-being and good order of society. There may be those who differ from him on this single point, but this will form no reason why we should not derive advantage from a life spent in unremitting exertions to prove experimentally what measures can really benefit the poor, who, we all acknowledge, stand in need of some substantial relief."

Extracts on this point have been perhaps unduly multiplied. Owen saw how religious opinions, all over the world, in a multitude of well-defined forms, kept

men apart who might otherwise have joined in good work. Belief, in its narrowest conceptions and most exclusive spirit, had divided men, and he, by pointing out how much unreasoning bigotry was due to early inculcation, strove to get this important truth so far acknowledged as to make charity the animating spirit in all faith. Very possibly his zeal was animated by what he had himself to endure, from the annoying antagonism of a man belonging to one of the smallest sects to be found in connection with any of the great faiths of the world,—a sect too, that, whilst conspicuous for its honesty and good works, had been sorely persecuted by the sincere bigots of the more orthodox creeds. The trial Owen had to go through in abandoning an experiment on the success of which he had set his heart, must have been very severe; and he left New Lanark amid the deep regret of those on whose behalf he had so long and so generously laboured.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Factory Labour.—Reform.

When Robert Owen left New Lanark he was fifty-seven years old. In such a work he had needed sympathy and help, and found little else than opposition. Some of his partners had objects of their own to pursue, and gave little time to an understanding of the true facts of his situation; and no doubt Mr Allen, living near them, contrived to instil into their minds a portion of his own distrust. Jeremy Bentham

could not be influenced by any unworthy prejudice, but he was always busy in the work to which he had devoted his long life, and could afford little time to disputes which, however important in regard to the condition of the New Lanark people and their children, were, apart from the studious working out of his own ideas, away from the strivings and contentions of the world.

It is true that Owen made the New Lanark concern pay well. According to the report of Bentham's friends, it was the only one of his speculative ventures that did pay. There was alarm on another head, however, and it is just possible that men living so far away from the spot where the practical operations of the co-partnery were carried on, might have regarded Owen's proceedings as involving risks they were not disposed to run. It must be remembered too that at the time of the dissolution the Limited Liability Act had no existence. To teach the young was not his only determination. He had so strongly resolved that the system of factory labour, which was destroying the health, the happiness, and the moral worth of the people connected with it, and thus prospectively working the nation's ruin, should be altered. In a great manufacturing system, including the operations of many hundred employers, it is very difficult for one, or for a small number, to set an example of improvement. Equal conditions of economy in working are almost necessary amongst manufacturing rivals competing in the same markets. The few in such cases cannot safely take on themselves charges which the many refuse to incur. Owen had, therefore, to feel his way—to count the cost of such changes as he

might make, and only to act where what he proposed to do did not threaten danger to his success as a manufacturer. He was associated with partners from first to last, and therefore he had to succeed in realising a satisfactory profit, and only when this was successfully accomplished could he use a portion of the overplus in improving the condition of those by whose labour it had been created.

His two first dissolutions of partnership were not connected with business losses. On the contrary, the business profits were large,—so large, in fact, that their amount was what induced his partners to exclude the workers from any share in their apportionment. Owen's success as a business man was one of his principal drawbacks, as realising large profits for dividend on share capital created a disinclination in the partners to decrease these dividends, by incurring expenses on behalf of the workers which were not included in the charges of ordinary factory management. As has been stated, the separation from the last set of partners had quite a different cause. But whatever the disposition of his partners, or whatever the motives through which they acted, his mind was made up to one course, to insist on the education of all the young under his control, and to work the establishment on such conditions as included the welfare of everybody connected with it.

The first of his public acts of which we have any record had reference to this latter point. His paper read before a committee of management of the Board of the Cotton Trade, at Glasgow in 1803, is a remarkable document, both in regard to its general statements and the arguments it contains in connec-

tion with the national importance of the cotton trade to Great Britain, and the danger of treating such a trade in the way in which British statesmen at that early date were treating it. "For a number of years," says M'Culloch, "previously to 1831, the only duty on foreign cotton amounted to 6 per cent. *ad valorem;* but in order to make up, in part at least, for the loss of revenue caused by the repeal of the duty on printed cottons, it was raised in that year to 5s. 10d. per cwt. Such a duty would have materially affected the imports of the inferior species of cotton and the price of coarse goods, and being, of course, justly objected to, it was reduced in 1833 to 2s. 11d. per cwt."

In 1803, at the meeting mentioned, Owen presented his memorial, which was ordered to be printed and circulated for the "information of the world at large." It was prepared and published twelve years before the corn laws were enacted,—when the Government, as Mr Dunckley says, "seized on every article which, by any stretch of possibility, an Englishman could want," when "considerably more than a thousand different kinds of foreign produce were prohibited from enriching us unless they purchased that privilege at the custom-house." The class to which Owen's paper was addressed was in favour of duty-free cotton, because its members were personally interested. Robert Owen, however, thinking of the interests of the nation, sought to enforce principles applicable to all trades; while his brother manufacturers, though deprecating the duty on cotton, were against a free export of machinery, and opposed the emigration of men skilled in its manufacture.

I shall give here the principal part of this document,

as, independent of everything else, it contains figures and arguments of permanent value.

"In the year 1765, cotton as an article of commerce was scarcely known in this country. A few years afterwards Mr Arkwright obtained his patent for working cotton by machinery. In 1782 the whole produce of the cotton manufacturer did not exceed £2,000,000 sterling. In 1801 the import of cotton wool into Great Britain was £42,000,000, and the estimated value of the cotton manufactures £15,000,000 sterling; such was the rapid increase of this trade to the end of the year 1801. From authentic documents it appears that the import of this article in 1802 has not been less than £54,000,000, and the increase in the value of the manufacture has been corresponding. The following particulars of the trade, it is presumed, will be found accurate. The raw material, when delivered on board the merchant ships, now costs about £4,000,000 sterling. Upwards of 30,000 tons of shipping, and 2,000 seamen, are employed in bringing the cotton wool to this country, and in exporting the goods manufactured from it.

"To work the wool into thread requires a capital in buildings and machinery to the amount of £9,225,000; and those buildings and machinery are chiefly composed of bricks, slates, glass, timber, lead, iron, copper, tin, and leather,—from most of which, in one shape or other, a considerable duty is collected for the support of the State.

"This trade gives employment or support to upwards of 800,000 individuals, and the annual return of the manufacture is nearly as follows:—

Cost of cotton in the countries where it grows, insurance, freight, other shipping charges, and merchants' freight....................................	£4,725,000
The interest at 5 per cent. upon the capital of £9,225,000 sunk in buildings and machinery, with 10 per cent. for wear and tear of ditto....	1,383,750
Wages of spinning, value of material consumed in the process of spinning the cotton into thread, and spinners' profit..................................	5,100,000
Value of materials consumed in subsequent manufactures, manufacturing wages, interest of capital, and profit......................................	9,000,000
	£20,208,750

Of which sum at least £13,000,000 sterling are paid in wages to the natives of Great Britain.

"The above calculations, both with respect to the money and the people employed, are considerably underrated, that no room might be left for any species of exaggeration; and it should be noticed, that a great proportion of the materials employed, such as ashes, soap, candles, leather, oil, dye-stuffs, &c., pay very considerable sums as duties to the Government.

"But the importance of this manufacture will be more justly appreciated, when we consider that the £13,000,000 paid for manual labour in this trade are annually expended in purchasing the produce of land, and also in buying other articles of necessity, which, by excise duties or other taxes, contribute in a very great degree to put the finances of Great Britain in a situation infinitely superior to any other nation in Europe.

"From this cause also, more than from any other, has proceeded the late, otherwise astonishing, increase in the value of landed property, and in the revenues

of this country; and should this branch of our manufacture be injured or lost, it may be confidently predicted, that both land and revenue would suffer by its decline in the same proportion that they had been benefited by its success.

"It therefore becomes the duty of those immediately interested in the cotton business, as well as of every well-wisher to the landed property, revenues, and general prosperity of the empire, to inquire what influence the Act of Parliament passed last session, laying certain duties upon the importation of cotton wool into Great Britain, may have upon this most important source of our wealth, industry, and prosperity.

. . . . . .

"Independent of the universally acknowledged impolicy of imposing a duty on the importation of raw material, which is afterwards to go through a multiplied and highly valuable manufacture, and without considering the essential injury which this country will sustain by being prevented from becoming the emporium in Europe of cotton wool, can it be supposed that, under the circumstances before mentioned, a commercial nation, so well informed of her interest as Great Britain is, should impose a duty on a raw material upon which her prosperity now so greatly depends, and which operates as a bounty to the same amount to the foreign manufacturer, who is afterwards to meet in competition with the British merchant for the sale of goods manufactured from this material?

"On many qualities of this raw material the duty amounts to from 10 to 20 per cent. on the first cost of cotton.

"To prove that this duty is not of small consideration to the trade, it is only necessary to mention that some houses, in an early stage of the manufacture, pay each, in part of it, upwards of £6,000 per annum. Is this to be considered but a trifling inducement to a foreign manufacturer to establish works of an equal extent in situations where the raw material can be imported free of duty; and, with such encouragement held out to strangers, will Acts of Parliament prevent our artisans from being enticed abroad, and our machinery from being smuggled out of the kingdom?

"But there is another circumstance relative to the cotton trade which calls for the most serious consideration of the Legislature of this country, which is, that duties may be levied, and restrictions laid, upon it without the evil effects of these being immediately discovered, because whatever encouragement may be given to the foreign manufacturer by restrictions and duties imposed upon the trade in this country, it will require time for him to erect his buildings, construct his machinery, and initiate his workpeople in the operative parts of the manufacture; but when these are completed, and the produce of them brought to market, the impolicy of these duties and restrictions will be obvious when too late; and then neither the repeal of them, nor even bounties given for the importation of cotton wool, will repair the loss which must be sustained, first by the British manufacturer, and afterwards, in a far more extensive and serious degree, by the British nation."

At the time when this paper was issued, there was no disposition, on the part of the men in power, to take note of the admonitions it contained, and for several years longer the cotton duty was not much

thought of. Owen could do nothing as an individual in connection with such a question, as when legislation requires to be forced, especially in regard to the abrogation of taxation, such action as individual men can take counts for little. Under these circumstances, he confined himself chiefly to making such improvements among the population of New Lanark as would enable him to judge of what might be ventured on, or recommended as ameliorative legislation for the workers. From 1803 to 1815 the factory system had gone on developing. The legislation of 1802 (Peel's Act) did little or nothing, as already pointed out. The apprentice system had died a natural death,—the pauper children were no longer needed. The population had been taken possession of, body and soul. Among the general mass of the factory population the idea of the family was rapidly disappearing. Parents trafficked in the lives of their children, whom they neglected in education, morals, and health. In return, the children neglected the parents when their turn to need help came; what they earned they required for self-indulgence; and in this way, wherever the factory system prevailed, the old virtues of English family life disappeared, and in their place came individual selfishness, indiscriminate vice, and the debility caused by premature and excessive work.

CHAPTER XIX.

Factory Reform.

VOLUMES might be filled with illustrations of the foregoing general statement on the condition of the factory population. There was another danger in addition to this, which forced on the minds of thoughtful men of every class the gravest considerations and questionings as to the evil condition of the nation socially and industrially.

In 1811 the Ludd riots, as they were called, began to assume serious shape. The Luddites entered on a crusade against machinery. Their operations, commenced in Nottingham, were carried on extensively in Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lancashire, Cheshire, and Yorkshire ; and though these were the principal centres, the riots extended to every part of the kingdom where machinery was making inroads on the industry of the people, and, as they phrased it, "eating their bread." Bodies of men attacked at night places where machinery was employed, and the outrages committed were often of a serious character. When they were suppressed, the discontent that bred them still remained ; everywhere, throughout the manufacturing districts, the people were ready for riot when any kind of unusual excitement prevailed.

Up to 1815 little was done to press on Parliament the repeal of duty on raw cotton. During this time Owen had applied himself to the discovery of methods which would combine a just and considerate treat-

ment of the workpeople with the requisite profit on capital, to the introduction, in fact, of a plan which would unite the two interests—labour and capital—which, as embodied in our great and rapidly-growing factory system, were separated and antagonistic. In his management of the New Lanark mills he succeeded so well in his undertaking, that when his partners forced a dissolution under the fear that, by his expenditure on the people, he might injure their interests, it was found that, after paying "5 per cent. on the capital employed, the net profit was £160,000, and this was on the working of four years only, being £40,000 a year.

In 1815, after an interval of twelve years, Robert Owen became again publicly active. What at the opening of the century were prophecies as to the evil effects of the factory system as then worked had become facts. Men had no longer to speculate as to what might be the result of such a system in future years, it was now under their eyes in all its hideousness. Domestic life had as nearly as possible disappeared. Gaskell* says the workpeople had to rise between four and five all the year round; that, still weary from the previous long day's work, old and young hurried to the mill, with or without food. At eight o'clock, half-an-hour, and in some cases forty minutes, was allowed for breakfast. The engine frequently worked on, so that the meal had to be eaten and the work overlooked at the same time. Breakfast, which was brought to the mill, usually consisted of weak tea,

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* "The Manufacturing Population in England," by P. Gaskell. Baldin & Cradock, 1833.

nearly cold, with bread, or milk and meal porridge, sometimes a little gin or other stimulant. When the hands lived near the mill they went home to breakfast, but this was not the rule. After this there was nothing but the continued never-ceasing grind of the machinery, without one minute's interruption, till twelve o'clock. The mill then stopped till one, and the hands rushed home to snatch their dinner, which, says Gaskell, consisted of boiled potatoes, very often eaten alone, and sometimes with a portion of animal food, this latter being only found at the tables of the more provident. If the houses, as was commonly the case, were some little distance from the factory, much of the hour was consumed in going and coming. An old woman in the neighbourhood of the home usually cooked, in the worst way, such food as the family devoured in a kind of scramble, and as soon as this was over the family again dispersed each to his or her work,—no rest, no pause; a hurry from work, a voracious rapidity at the meal, a hurry back to the straps and wheels, and cranks and pulleys, and cotton dust. From one o'clock till eight or nine, the wearying labour of the mill went on without ceasing, with the exception of twenty minutes allowed usually at four o'clock for tea, or "bagging" as it was called; and thus for old and young, from year's end to year's end, the terrible grind went on. The rooms they worked in were crowded; there was no rest, little attention to cleanliness; the atmosphere necessarily overheated; whilst the food taken to the mill was frequently covered with cotton flue,—the result of all being, deformity, ignorance, premature death, and much else, that made the factory system of England

for many years the worst curse by which the people of this country were ever afflicted.

Nor can it be said that the evil was confined to the workers; the sons of the manufacturers were ignorant, and to a great extent vicious, their habits and amusements differing from those of the workers chiefly in their expensiveness. There were, no doubt, here and there groups of educated and studious people, resembling those of whom Coleridge spoke when he visited Manchester with a view to the establishment of his paper; but such glimpses as were to be had into the life of a middle class, suddenly become wealthy and luxurious, though they did not impeach the comparative purity of middle class family life, leave no doubt as to the general character of the men who at that period were the owners and directors of the factories and warehouses.

The nobler thoughts in connection with human life, its duties and responsibilities, were not likely to take root and flourish in a soil so saturated with greed and selfishness. To make money was the one great object of existence, and no class of men ever succeeded better in carrying out this master-thought than the factory owners of the cotton districts. Except in rare individual instances they did nothing to prevent the degradation of the people whose fate was at that time in their hands. For many years this bad state of things has been altering for the better. Much of the public work of Manchester and its neighbourhood has been of a generous and noble kind, whilst her people, struggling out of the slough into which they were cast, are moving forward; but the time and the opportunity were lost when the great cotton industry began its

giant growth, and hence recent efforts, whatever they may amount to, are but the bringing up of an arrear of duty, the accumulation of which an earlier thoughtfulness would have prevented.

The reforms effected by Owen at New Lanark were frequently brought under the notice of the public, the works being open to the inspection of all who thought proper to visit them. His address to his brother manufacturers, already quoted, shows how anxious he was that they also should endeavour to make their profits as manufacturers compatible with the welfare of their people. His name was well known as that of the leading spinner of fine cotton, and as such the various mills of the country were open to him. "I visited most of them," he says, "from north to south, to enable me to form a correct judgment of the condition of the children and workpeople employed in them. I thus saw the importance of the machinery employed in these manufactories, and its rapid annual improvements; I also became vividly alive to the deteriorating condition of the young children and others who were made the slaves of these new mechanical powers." To this statement he adds an opinion, that the condition of the house slave which he afterwards saw in the West Indies and in the United States, was better than what he had witnessed amongst the factory workers of Great Britain, especially in food and clothing.

In the early part of 1815 Owen decided on making a public attempt to call the attention of the manufacturers to the condition of the cotton trade and the people employed in it. At his request a meeting was called in the Tontine, Glasgow, "to consider the

policy of asking the Government to remit the heavy duty on raw cotton, and to consider measures for improving the condition of the children and others employed in connection with the various textile manufactures." This meeting was presided over by the Lord Provost, and was attended by the leading manufacturers of the district. The propositions read to the meeting on these two subjects were differently received. The first, asking for a remission of the tax, was enthusiastically accepted; whilst the second, asking for the relief of those employed, did not even find a seconder. When this occurred, Owen declined to proceed any further in the business of the meeting. Driven back thus, by the disinclination of the factory owners to look beyond their own selfish and immediate interest, he determined to go to work in a different way. He sent a copy of the address he had read at the meeting, to the Lord Provost of Glasgow as chairman, to the members of the Government, also a copy to each member of both Houses of Parliament, and in addition procured its publication in the London and provincial newspapers.

An extract or two may convey some indication of the importance of this address:—"Hitherto, in consequence of the conflict of contending nations for their political existence, we have had no competitors in this manufacture that could materially retard its progress. But this conflict is now terminated; peace pervades the continent of Europe; and, I trust, ere long we shall receive intelligence of the ratification of peace between the British empire and America. We must, however, now prepare for a new rivalry, a rivalry in arts and manufactures; and, as the political

importance of the cotton trade is already duly appreciated in every State in Europe, from seeing and feeling the effects of the wealth and power which it has created in this country, we may rest assured that all means will be used by those States to participate in its advantages, and that each Government will willingly render its subjects every assistance to procure some share of its benefits." He then recounts the many advantages of the cotton trade in connection with the industry and wealth to be gained by it, and takes into consideration the objections that have been urged against it. "These lamentable results, however," he remarks, "can be known only by experience, and now that the experience is acquired, it is too late to retrace our steps. Were we inclined, we cannot now return to our former state, for, without the cotton trade, our increased population cannot be supported, the interest of our national debt paid, nor the expenses of our fleets and armies defrayed. Our existence as an independent power now, I regret to say, depends on the continuance of this trade, because no other can be substituted in its place. True indeed it is, that the main pillar and prop of the political greatness and prosperity of our country is a manufacture which, as it is now carried on, is destructive of the health, morals, and social comforts of the mass of the people engaged in it."

But he asks, "Cannot these evils be remedied?" and to this question gives the following reply:—"I know there are those who have not thought on the subject, and others who, if they are well off themselves, care little about the sufferings of those around them. To these, if there are any such present, I do not now

address myself. I wish rather to fix the attention of those who can look beyond the passing hour, who can accurately trace future consequences from existing causes,—those who feel an extended interest in the welfare of their species, who have discovered that wealth is not happiness, and that an apparent greatness, founded on the miseries of the people, is not permanent and substantial power." "It is only," he continues, "since the introduction of the cotton trade that children at an age before they had acquired strength or mental instruction have been forced into cotton mills, those receptacles, in too many instances, for living human skeletons, almost disrobed of intellect, where, as the business is often now conducted, they linger out a few years of miserable existence, acquiring every bad habit, which they disseminate throughout society. It is only since the introduction of this trade, that children, and even grown people, were required to labour more than twelve hours in the day, not including the time allotted for meals. It is only since the introduction of this trade, that the sole recreation of the labourer is to be found in the pothouse or ginshop. It is only since the introduction of this baneful trade, that poverty, crime, and misery have made rapid and fearful strides throughout the community."

The following earnest and humane appeal is addressed to his brother manufacturers:—"Shall we then, go unblushingly and ask the legislators of our, country to pass legislative acts to sanction and increase this trade,—to sign the death-warrants of the strength, morals, and happiness of thousands of our fellow-creatures,—and not attempt to propose correctives

for the evils which it creates? If such shall be your determination, I, for one, will not join in the application; nay, I will, with all the faculties I possess, oppose every attempt to extend a trade that, except in name, is more injurious to those employed in it than is the slavery in the West Indies to the poor negroes. For deeply as I am interested in the cotton manufacture, highly as I value the extended political power of my country, yet knowing as I do, from long experience both here and in England, the miseries which this trade as it is now conducted inflicts on those to whom it gives employment, I do not hesitate to say, Perish the cotton trade! perish even the political superiority of our country!—if it depends on the cotton trade—rather than they shall be upheld by the sacrifice of everything valuable in life."

CHAPTER XX.

Factory Bill Struggle.

As soon as Robert Owen had given a wide publicity to the address referred to in the last chapter, he proceeded to London to consult with the Government as to whether any steps could be at once taken to rescue the factory workers from the suffering and degradation of their position. He had stated to the Glasgow meeting that there were certain points that ought to be insisted on in the interest of those engaged in the factories. First, "To prevent children from being employed in cotton or other mills of

machinery until they are twelve years old." At that time they were commonly put to work at seven, and not unfrequently at six years of age. Secondly, "That the hours of work in mills of machinery—including one hour and a half for meals and recreation—shall not exceed twelve per day." The hours at that date were, for children as well as for adults, fourteen, and in many cases only one hour was allowed for meals. Third, "That, after a period to be fixed, no child should be received in a mill of machinery until he shall have been taught to read, to write a legible hand, and to understand the first four rules of arithmetic; and the girls, in addition, to be taught to sew their common articles of clothing."

These heads he had put into the form of a Bill, defining the meaning, and method of carrying them out; but he altered the age at which children were to be admitted to work in the factories to ten years, in the conviction, no doubt, that insisting on twelve would increase the difficulties his proposals would have to encounter. He also altered the hours from twelve to twelve and a half; the extra half hour was, however, to be devoted to instruction, leaving ten and a half hours as the time of working, as originally proposed. The Bill provided also for inspection on a more efficient plan than had hitherto existed. The inspectors were to have considerable power; and to make their action more effective it was provided, "That if any person or persons shall oppose or molest any of the said visitors in the execution of the powers entrusted to them by this Act, every such person or persons shall for every such offence forfeit and pay any sum not exceeding

ten pounds nor less than five pounds." In addition, it was provided that offences against the provisions of the Act should be punished by a like fine, one half of which was to be paid to the informer, thus giving the "hands" an opportunity of defending themselves against breaches of the law.

This may be considered the first real attempt, in connection with our new manufacturing system, to force the duty of inspection and control upon the Government of the country, for the purpose of protecting the worker against injurious action on the part of the employer. The principle of Government interference was then strongly opposed, and the opposition was carried on by persons who were powerful in the State compared with those for whose protection such legislation was sought. A great revolution was going forward in regard to the industry of the country, and the question was, whether the nation, represented by the State, had a right to check by law the growth of evils which, if left unchecked, might produce the worst calamities? A crowd left to act without any true sense of collective duty, is not likely to correct what is wrong, or very effectually promote what is right. Nor should much attention be given to persons who undertake to speak authoritatively in regard to public duties which may be performed by men, as individuals, but which they assert cannot be done by them in their collective capacity. Sensible people will not deny to themselves the right to correct evils or promote benefits by joint action which they find difficult to correct or promote by individual action. Neither should great respect be paid to the habit of sustaining individual and

class interests by abstract arguments,—to denouncing as unsound, in a politico-economic sense, reforms that, if carried, would result in great advantage to the public.

It was forgotten by those who opposed the interference of the State, that each case where the action of the State is called for, must be argued on its own merits as being practicable and useful to the community, and not in accordance with any abstract doctrine of State duty. There may be many things which it would be unwise for the State to touch; but the people who would seek to abolish organised action for public purposes, and reduce each man to the necessity of attending to his own sewers, or carrying his own letters, are not likely to be listened to with patience; and looking at the condition of our factory workers now, compared with what it was when Owen undertook his labours on their behalf, there are few sane men in the kingdom who, in deference to the most eloquent pleadings, would consent to undo what since then has been done on behalf of the working people.

At that early date no movement had been made by the factory people themselves,—they were rapidly sinking to a condition too low for this. Nor were the working people outside the factories much better. The Combination Laws had prevented them from acting together in joint undertakings. They were as feeble as isolation and ignorance could make them, and hence the few men who undertook to fight their battle, had to struggle, without assistance from those they sought to serve, against an opposition formed by those who were united to preserve a power by which they were rapidly growing rich at the cost of the morals, the health, and the happiness of the workers.

When Owen went to London in 1815, there was no strong party behind him, there was no deeply-felt sympathy on the part of the people with him, though there were a few friends who stood firmly on his side. In London he was known to considerable numbers of influential people, many of whom had visited the New Lanark establishment, and had become much interested, not only in his educational labours, but also in the great improvements he had made in the mode of carrying on factory labour. On his arrival he had an interview with Mr Nicholas Vansittart (afterwards Lord Bexley), and obtained from him a favourable hearing on the cotton tax. The Government he also found favourable to the claims of the children for further protection; but as at this time the enormously increased wealth of the manufacturers had made them powerful, not only in the country but in the House of Commons, he felt that at every step the strongest opposition would have to be encountered.

It was fortunate, however, that, with such a work to be done, his determination could not be abated by any kind of opposition. "I waited personally," he says, "on the leading members of both Houses, and explained to them my object, which was to give some relief to a most deserving yet much oppressed part of our population. I was, in general, well received, and had much promise of support, especially from the leaders of the various sections into which parties were then divided." When in this way the leading men of all parties were prepared to consider the question, it was felt desirable that the Bill which he had taken to London with him should be introduced.

A final meeting of the gentlemen who were co-

operating with him was called by himself and Lord Lascelles, afterwards Earl of Harewood. After some discussion, it was decided to ask Sir Robert Peel to take charge of the Bill in the House of Commons. He was an extensive manufacturer, had been active in procuring protection for the factory apprentices, stood well with the House and also with the Government, and, though up to that time he had taken no active steps in the new movement, he was believed to be friendly to the objects the promoters of the Bill had in view. Owen waited on Sir Robert, to ascertain his views on the subject, and procured his promise to introduce and support the measure in the House. He agreed to attend the next meeting of those favourable to the Bill, that the best mode of proceeding might be decided upon; but Owen, who was not disposed to suspect on slight grounds, was persuaded that when he undertook this task his heart was not in it, in consequence, perhaps, of the length to which it was proposed to go in shortening the hours of labour. It was not suspected that he was not thoroughly honest in his intentions; but the proposed measure was different in principle and wider in scope than the measure of 1802, and it is fair to assume that Sir Robert, as a manufacturer, was to some extent influenced by his brother manufacturers, who were greatly alarmed as to the probable effect of the Bill, and who had made their minds up to give it all the opposition in their power.

It took four years to get the Bill through Parliament, and then it was so mutilated that Owen felt it to be scarcely worth the trouble it had cost. It was confined in its operation to cotton mills, and altered the

ten years fixed as the time at which children should be admitted into factories to nine. It extended the ten and a half hours which were to constitute the day's work to twelve, for young persons of from nine to sixteen years; Owen having fixed the ages from ten to eighteen. There were many other alterations which, precluding a settlement of the question for a considerable period, opened the whole matter up as the subject of a contention, which, on the factory question alone, was continued for thirty years, and which when carried into the workshops may be said to have lasted for half a century.

During these four weary years of parliamentary struggle, Owen always remained in London in the session. At page 116 of his slight autobiographical sketch he tells us his experience of our legislative assembly and its proceedings:—"At the commencement I was an utter novice in the manner of conducting the business of this country in Parliament; but my intimate acquaintance with these proceedings, for the four years during which this Bill was under the consideration of both Houses, opened my eyes to the conduct of public men, and to the ignorant vulgar self-interest, regardless of means to accomplish their object, of trading and mercantile men, even of high standing in the commercial world. No means were left untried by these men to defeat the object of the Bill in the first session of its introduction, and through four years in which, under one futile pretence and another, it was kept in the House of Commons."

Every clause of the Bill contained overwhelming proof of its necessity; and knowing this, they sought

to damage Owen's facts and destroy his influence by personal attacks, and to this end sent a deputation into Scotland to seek for some flaw in the character of Owen himself. This very discreditable attempt was a signal failure. The minister of the parish church was taken to London, but returned having done nothing. The Bill was passed, after the delay mentioned, and in the condition already indicated; and though Owen ceased to take much interest in it or its working, it completely altered the relations of employers and employed in the cotton factories of the country, and, in the end, over the whole field of the nation's industry.

It has already been said that the Act of 1802 had reference only to apprentices, and did not raise the question as to the right or the duty of parliamentary interference with what was called free labour. The conditions of the indenture continued to exist, and the State by the Act of 1802 simply placed itself in the position of guardian to pauper children, which, though inconvenient to certain of the employers, could scarcely be regarded as an interference with any private right either of the parent or the employer. The Act of 1819 was the assertion, however, of a distinct right on the part of the State to protect its citizens from the injurious consequences of their own acts, in one of the most important branches of the nation's industry; and therefore did actually open the door to all that has since followed in all our most important industries, and to such an extent that the doctrine of *laissez faire*, in regard to the factories, mines, and workshops of the country, is as dead as the doctrine of divine right.

This was not overlooked by the opponents of the Bill. It was urged that "legislative interference between the free labourer and his employer is a violent, highly dangerous, and unconstitutional innovation, and can be justified only upon the strong ground of a well established necessity." This was the strongest ground that could be taken up. The opposition, therefore, entrenched itself behind the demand for a "well established necessity" for interference, and on this ground were established claims for Government interference extending to nearly every important branch of industry carried on throughout the kingdom,—and, in every case, evidence was forthcoming in proof of the necessity for such legislation.

The discussions that took place during the whole of that period were accompanied by prophecies of loss of every possible kind in connection with the industry of the nation; not only loss of profit to the manufacturer, but of loss of wages to the workers, and, to crown all, the loss of the country's trade, in consequence of the more enlarged freedom of action enjoyed by the foreign producers. Not one of these prophecies has been fulfilled; neither profits nor wages suffered injury from the legislation complained of, nor did foreigners take our trade by lowness of cost in their own productions. Had they done so, they would have had no occasion to protect themselves in their own markets by import duties, a policy which nearly all nations where manufacturing is carried on have adopted, including certain of our own most important colonies.

CHAPTER XXI.

General Activity.

THE four years occupied by inquiries into the factory system, and the progress of the Bill through both Houses, were actively employed by Owen. His first care was for the factory children, and what made him more anxious for success in his undertaking was a fact which was developed prominently by the evidence given from the employers' side before the committee, namely, that the practices which prevailed were not considered as regrettable, but as necessarily arising out of the situation,—as perfectly right and justifiable,—as good, in every way, for all parties concerned. In truth, the system of factory working had so morally corrupted the men in whose interest it was carried on, that the distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil, in everything connected with it, were becoming rapidly obliterated.

To confine the attention of the nation to one of the numerous evils connected with the several new industries then coming into existence would have been an error. Owen saw many injurious symptoms outside the factory system, in connection with the labour of the country, and in conjunction with the newly-developed mechanical power then rapidly coming into use for protective purposes. One class, as he pointed out, was suffering deeply, but labour generally was rapidly getting into wrong grooves, and producing miseries and discontents until then comparatively unknown, as instanced in the Ludd riots;

and these, if not explained and corrected, were likely to lead to the worst consequences. During the years 1815 to 1819 he wrote several papers, which he circulated very extensively, and put himself into communication with many influential persons, that they might understand his views, and help in averting the dangers he apprehended.

In his "Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System," published in 1815, he dwelt on the rapid transference which was then taking place of the agricultural population to the manufacturing districts; upon the astonishing growth in the country of industry, population, and wealth; the consequent importance of our manufacturing system to the nation, and the paramount necessity of keeping it free from evils which, if unchecked in their growth, would more than counterbalance the benefits by which it was attended. "Hitherto," he says, "legislators have appeared to regard manufactures only from one point of view—as a source of national wealth. The other mighty consequences which proceed from extended manufactures, *when left to their natural progress*, have never yet engaged the attention of any legislature. Yet the political and moral effects to which we allude, well deserve to occupy the best faculties of the greatest and the wisest statesmen. The general diffusion of manufactures throughout the country generates a new character in its inhabitants; and as this character is formed upon a principle quite unfavourable to individual or general happiness, it will produce the most lamentable and permanent evils, unless its tendency be counteracted by legislative interference and direction."

He referred to the dangers by which a widely extended export trade might be attended, and the possible dangers of foreign competition should too much dependence be placed on foreign trade. In reference to the Corn Laws, which had been passed in the same year, 1815, and which had produced riots in London, he says:—"The direct effect of the Corn Bill will be to hasten this decline in the foreign trade. In this view, it is deeply to be regretted that the Bill passed into law; and I am persuaded its promoters will ere long discover the absolute necessity for its repeal, to prevent the misery which must ensue to the great mass of the people." After this he alludes to the deteriorating effect on the trading class of having their minds actively trained to the all-absorbing consideration of buying cheap and selling dear; and goes on to urge consideration of the many mischiefs likely to attend a too early employment of the young, and a too constant drudgery for a bare subsistence imposed on all, without time for rest or healthy sports and amusements. He contrasts a rational system of treating children with the treatment which, as proved by the strongest evidence, they were then receiving in the factories. "In the manufacturing districts," he says, "it is common for parents to send their children of both sexes at seven or eight years of age, in winter as well as summer, at six o'clock in the morning, sometimes of course in the dark, and occasionally amidst frost and snow, to enter the manufactories, which are often heated to a high temperature, and contain an atmosphere far from being the most favourable to human life." And then, going more generally into the subject, "I ask," he continues

"those who have studied the science of government upon those enlightened principles which alone ought to influence the statesman, what is the difference, in a national view, between an individual trained in habits which give him health, temperance, industry, correct principles of judgment, foresight, and general good conduct; and one trained in ignorance, idleness, intemperance, defective powers of judging, and, in general, vicious habits? Is not one of the former of more real worth and political strength to the State than many of the latter?"

The following is the closing paragraph of this paper: —"I now, therefore, in the name of the millions of neglected poor and ignorant whose habits and sentiments have been hitherto formed to render them wretched, call upon the British Government and the British nation to unite their efforts to arrange a system to train and instruct those who, for any good or useful purpose, are now untrained and uninstructed; and to arrest by a clear, easy, and practical system of prevention, the ignorance and consequent poverty, vice, and misery which are rapidly increasing throughout the empire: for, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.'"

In March 1817 Robert Owen published a report addressed to the Committee for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor. This is a carefully-drawn report, and is accompanied by plans of buildings; and, in connection with these, by a full explanation of the internal economy of such establishments as colonies for the poor. The employment of paupers is arranged for with regard to its useful-

ness as well as to its value as discipline, and estimates furnished of the cost per head in building and furnishing. "The immense sums," he says, "annually raised for them (the poor) are lavished in utter disregard of every principle of public justice and economy. They offer greater rewards for idleness and vice than for industry and virtue, and thus directly operate to increase the degradation and misery of the classes whom they are designed to serve. No sum, however enormous, administered after this manner could be productive of any other result,—rather will pauperism and wretchedness increase along with the increase of an expenditure thus applied." In this plan he proposes to do away with the heavy annual expenditure of poor-rates, by making these establishments self-supporting; to prevent the continuance of a pauper race, by the interposition of a system of education and industrial training, which would render the new generations unfit for the paupers' condition of life.

Many details are entered into, which show how carefully he had considered the subject. This pauperism is still (1882) a terrible drag on the nation's resources. It still descends as an inheritance from father to son; its cost still increases; it still calls for annual millions. The fifteen years ending 1881 give a return as actual expenditure on pauperism of 125 millions sterling, and, as in the last of these years more money was spent than in the first, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the next fifteen years may increase the sum to something approaching 150 millions. Owen insisted that these enormous sums could be saved were rational practical steps taken

for the employment of the poor, and, in his report, he pointed out how this might be done.

Carlyle's remarks on the condition of the paupers of England in 1843, some years after the whole system had been "reformed," are more picturesque, but not more true than Owen's. "Passing by the workhouse of St Ives, in Huntingdonshire, on a bright day last autumn, I saw, sitting on wooden benches in front of their Bastille, and within their ring wall and its railings, some half hundred and more of these men. Tall, robust figures, young mostly, or of middle age, of honest countenance, many of them thoughtful and even intelligent-looking men. They sat there, near by one another, but in a kind of torpor, especially in a silence, which was very striking. In silence, for, alas, what word was to be said? An earth all lying round, crying, 'Come and till me, come and reap me,' yet we here sit enchanted. In the eyes and brows of these men hung the gloomiest expression, not of anger, but of grief and shame, and manifold inarticulate distress and weariness. They returned my glance with a glance that seemed to say, 'Do not look at us, we sit enchanted here, we know not why. The sun shines, and the earth calls, and, by the governing powers and impotence of England, we are forbidden to obey. It is impossible, they tell us.'"

Further information on this head may be derived from Mr Nassau W. Senior, who, in the most prosaic way, and in the fewest words, tells the world in his essay on the English Poor Laws, that from 1784 to 1830, side by side with our enormous growth of manufacturing industry and what is called prosperity,

poor-rates had increased from slightly over two millions sterling to close on seven millions per annum ; and in "whole counties the rates equalled a third of the remaining rental, while estates were abandoned, and whole parishes were on the point of being thrown up, without capital or occupier, to the poor." During the progress of such a state of things, it is no wonder that a man like Owen thought and preached, and projected and laboured, so that men might be brought to a wise use of the wealth-creating power they possessed, and to a more humane and equitable distribution.

In the July of the same year (1817) Owen published a further development of his plan for the relief of the manufacturing and labouring poor. In this he more fully explains, by question and answer, how his plans were to be carried out, and replies to many of the theoretical objections which at that time were discussed by those whose minds had been directed to the subject. One of the questions put and answered in this document relates to the objection founded on the argument of Malthus as to the rapid increase of population and its pressure on the supply of food.

The question is, "But will not these establishments tend to increase population beyond the means of subsistence, too rapidly for the wellbeing of society?" He answers, "I have no apprehension whatever on this ground. Every agriculturist knows that each labourer now employed in agriculture can produce five or six times more food than he can eat; and, therefore, even if no other facilities were given to him than those he now possesses, there is no necessity in nature for 'the population to press against subsist-

ence' until the earth is fully cultivated. There can be no doubt that it is the artificial law of supply and demand, arising from the principle of individual gain, in opposition to the general wellbeing of society, which has hitherto compelled population to press upon subsistence. The certain effect of acting on the principle of individual gain is ever to limit the supply of food, in an average season, to a sufficiency according to the customs of the times for the existing inhabitants of the earth ; consequently, in a favourable season, and in proportion as the season may be favourable, there will be abundance of food, and it will be cheap ; and in an unfavourable season, in proportion as the season may be unfavourable, food will be scarce and dear, and famine will ensue. And yet no one who understands anything practically on the subject, can for a moment doubt that at the period immediately preceding the most grievous famine ever known, the means existed in ample profusion to have enabled the population, under proper arrangements, had they possessed the knowledge to form them, to produce a stock of food amounting even to an excessive superabundance. Whatever may have been imagined by intelligent individuals who have written and thought upon the subject, the annual increase of population is really one by one. We know its utmost limit, it is only—it can be only—an arithmetical increase ; whereas each individual brings into the world with him the means, aided by the existing knowledge of science, and under proper direction, sufficient to enable him to produce food equal to more than ten times his consumption. The fear, then, of any evil to arise from an excess of population until

such time as the whole earth shall become a highly cultivated garden will, on due and accurate investigation, prove a mere phantom of the imagination, calculated solely to keep the world in unnecessary ignorance, vice, and crime, and to prevent society from becoming what it ought to be, well-trained and well-instructed, and, under an intelligent system of mutual goodwill and kindness, active, virtuous, and happy."

Since these words were written tons of paper have been used in controversies relative to the correctness of the views of Malthus on the different ratios of increase in food and population. Such a dispute can scarcely be considered worth the paper used in carrying it on. Our population in 1801 was over nine millions. According to the ratio of increase with which Malthus frightened our fathers, it ought in 1882 to have been over ninety millions, whilst the census taken in 1881 tells us that we are still under twenty-six millions. The food supplies, however, in their increase, have distanced anything the wildest imagination could have dreamed of, as in 1880 our imports of food amounted to no less a sum than 121½ millions sterling. Our population is sixty-four millions less than it should have been, as prospectively added up by Malthus; whilst our food supplies from foreign sources are at least 115 millions of pounds' worth more than he or his disciples took into their reckoning, whilst the fields from which this marvellous supply comes are daily widening, and becoming by power of transit more accessible. Owen grasped the higher and more essential truth when he said, "It is the artificial law of supply and demand, arising from the

principles of individual gain, in opposition to the general wellbeing of society, which has hitherto compelled population to press upon subsistence."

CHAPTER XXII.

Plans and Principles.

WHEN Robert Owen was in London, fighting his battle for the factory children, he derived no support from the working people. He had never made any appeal to them through the press or from the platform, as he counted on getting the kind of support he most needed from persons who by their wealth and influence were likely in the shortest time, and in the most practical way, to give effect to his proposals. "At this period," he says, "I had no public intercourse with the operatives and working classes in any part of the two islands—not even in the metropolis. They were strangers to me and to all my views and future intentions. I was at all periods of my progress, from my earliest knowledge and employment of them, their true friend; whilst their democratic and much-mistaken leaders taught them that I was their enemy, a friend to all in authority, and that I desired to make slaves of them in these villages of unity and mutual co-operation."

Owen had, in fact, to hold his first meeting with no support beyond what came through the sympathy of the friends he met in London, of those who had visited New Lanark, or of such persons as had come to him

through reading his published addresses. Emphatically he had no party. The subject he had to deal with was not in its true character easily understood; and the common run of Tories and Whigs, combined with those who had taken religion under their charge, disliked his proposals as tending to open up questions in relation to which they desired quietude and silence.

He had around him a large number of influential persons, but he suspected that many of these would fly off when public opposition became vigorous. His great reliance was on the newspaper press, and he secured the insertion of his first addresses by agreeing to purchase largely the papers which inserted them. The proceedings connected with the great meetings held in the City of London Tavern, 1817, cost him four thousand pounds. His addresses were published in full in every London morning and evening newspaper, and, beyond the ordinary circulation of these papers, he purchased thirty thousand extra copies, and had one copy sent to the minister of every parish in the kingdom; one also to every member of both Houses of Parliament, one to each of the chief magistrates and bankers in each city and town in England, and one to each of the leading persons of all classes in each of these cities and towns. In addition, he published three broadsheets, containing the details of his proceedings as given in the *Times* and in the other London morning and evening papers. Of these broadsheets he printed forty thousand copies, and such, he says, "was the eagerness to procure them, that the forty thousand were called for in three days."

It was while he was making these efforts he became

aware of the steps taken by his opponents to destroy the effects of his labours by secret attempts at defamation, especially on religious grounds. He found that these efforts were not entirely without success, as some who had been friendly up to that time drew off in alarm. He expresses himself as not surprised at this, seeing that much he had said was calculated to excite the prejudices of those not thoroughly acquainted with his meaning and intentions. To himself such an opposition was not of much consequence; but these attempts, coupled with what was done in the same way by the factory owners, put upon him the necessity of stating distinctly his views in regard to religion. He says, "When the weapons used in this warfare, however unfair and illegitimate they may have been, were directed against the individual only, they were disregarded. I cared, and do still care, as little for the individual as any of his opponents did or can. I make him, as they shall now be made, an instrument to forward measures for our mutual and general benefit. He has been hitherto so employed without regard to vanity or self-consequence of any kind. But as absurd and ridiculous insinuations now set afloat are intended to retard the work I have undertaken, they must be met, and they have determined the next step that I shall adopt, and about which I was deliberating. It is that a public meeting shall be held in the City of London Tavern, on Thursday the 14th day of August, to take into consideration a plan to be proposed to relieve the country from its present distress, to remoralise the poor, reduce the poor-rates, and abolish pauperism and all its injurious consequences. At that meeting I invite

those parties, and any others whom they can enlist in their cause, to come forward and make everything they have to say against me publicly known. I wish to gratify them to the utmost of their desires, and as they may not possess all the requisites for the purpose, I will give them the clue by which they may pursue and discover all the errors of my past life."

After this follows a short sketch of the life he had lived up to that time, and he adds, "I wish that everything which can be said against the individual may be urged by those who are desirous so to do, in order to have done with these trifling and insignificant personalities, and that I may proceed onward to the accomplishment of that which is of real practical utility. Let them, therefore, at such public meeting bring forward every saying and action of mine that has displeased them. I only ask that the attack shall be fair, open, and direct. It shall then be met, and shall be overcome. I shall," he continues, "not ask for or accept any quarter. My purpose has been long fixed, and my determination is not to give any quarter to the errors and evils of the existing systems, —civil, political, and religious."

Owen, at his meetings, fulfilled his promise. He certainly kept nothing back; indeed, it is questionable whether he did not go further than was necessary in challenging the hostility of enemies. Upon the whole, perhaps, his conclusion was the right one; for though he had at the moment raised up much opposition, it is certain that time being given the opposition would have come, as the charges of uncharitable bigots once commenced seldom cease until their objects are accomplished.

The worst part of the opposition was not that made on religious grounds. Curiously enough, the liberal political men, who ought to have given him support, thronged to his first meeting in a spirit of unmitigated hostility,—Henry Hunt, the Radical leader, who, two years afterwards, figured at Peterloo, Manchester; Mr Wooler, of Black Dwarf notoriety; Mr Waithman, afterwards well known as Alderman Waithman, and in connection with his publication, *The Reformists' Register;* William Hone, the author of the "Everyday Book," whose attack was severe, though not damaging. An impartial examination of the proposals that called forth this strange antagonism will show how unreasonable it was, and how deplorable the spirit of party is when those who lead take no trouble to examine and comprehend what they undertake either to oppose or support.

The Government of the day was actively hostile to political reform of every kind, and by the Radical party they were always suspected and opposed. Several of its members were in favour of Robert Owen's proposals for a reform of the factory system, and this made the Radicals suspect him; but had they listened and understood, they must have seen that in the reforms he asked for and advocated, he was one of the most thorough Radicals of his time. He laid it down emphatically,—"(1.) That a country can never be beneficially wealthy while it supports a large portion of its working classes in idle poverty, or in useless occupation. (2.) That ignorance and poverty must demoralise the inhabitants of any country. (3.) That a population so demoralised, surrounded by such temptations as gin-shops, low

pot-houses, gambling, and other inducements to evil conduct, must, as a matter of mere necessity, become imbecile and useless, or vicious and criminal. (4.) That strong coercion, and cruel and useless punishments, must necessarily follow. (5.) That discontent, and every kind of opposition to those who govern, must inevitably ensue, at a heavy cost both in crime and punishment to the general community. (6.) That, while these incentives to everything vile and criminal shall be permitted and encouraged by Government, it is downright mockery to talk about religion, and of improving the condition and morals of the working classes. (7.) That to talk and act thus, in a vain attempt to deceive the public, is inconsistent and unmeaning jargon, by which the public cannot continue to be deceived. (8.) That to expect any permanent national improvement, whilst such a condition of things is allowed to remain, is the same as to expect the drying up of the ocean while all the rivers of the earth are pouring their streams into its waters."

Then follows this query:—"Shall yet another year pass in which crime shall be forced on the infant who, in ten, twenty, or thirty years, shall perhaps suffer death for the ignorance and bad example that led to such crime? Should such be the case, the members of the present Parliament—the legislators of to-day—ought, in strict and impartial justice, to be amenable to the laws for not adopting the means in their power to prevent the crime, rather than the poor, untrained, and unprotected culprit, whose previous years, if he had language to describe them, would exhibit a life of unceasing wretchedness,

and that arising solely from the errors of society." Notwithstanding these extreme views, and this bold expression of strong Radical thought, the political leaders, not finding in it the ordinary slang of the political warfare in which they had been engaged, gave so fierce an opposition that, although the first resolutions proposed were ultimately passed, the meeting had to be adjourned for a week. William Hone, a thoroughly honest reformer, who had fought and suffered for his principles, did not see the position. He was a believer in Malthus, and was indignant that Owen should thrust aside without ceremony an authority who had proved so clearly that, whilst population increased in the geometrical ratio of 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, food could only increase in an arithmetical ratio of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. This misleading popular fallacy now only lingers here and there, like the belief in witchcraft.

This meeting was the occasion of one of his large investments in newspapers. He purchased and circulated thirty thousand through the post-office; and as in those days the mail-coaches alone were available for transmission, the secretary of the post-office had to send an official minute to the Treasury to say that Mr Owen had sent so many extra newspapers, that the mail-coaches leaving London had to be delayed twenty minutes beyond the regular time.

It was not on the political side, however, that Owen saw his chief danger. The opposition suddenly started on him at his great city meeting was the result of ignorance as to his character and intentions, but this, as the agitation proceeded, might have been easily corrected. His earnestness, and the

comprehensiveness of his proposals in connection with the condition of the working population, would have overcome all popular opposition in a reasonable time. The opposition on religious grounds could not be thus vanquished. Delay promised a serious increase of danger, and he decided at once to take up the challenge given by those who had entered the lists against him on religious grounds. His plans for industrial villages contained provision for education, and there can be no doubt that he was strongly opposed to any kind of sectarianism. Much as we condemn the attempts which were made to damage his reputation, allowance must be made in some degree for honest alarm in regard to the religious teaching that might be introduced into these proposed villages.

His enthusiasm in favour of his plans was unbounded, while the knowledge he possessed of the evil effects of an active sectarianism, then felt by him in his own person, led to his decision to immediately face this difficulty. It is not unlikely, if he had succeeded in starting one or two of his villages, that gradually an over-active proselytism might have crept in, as his leading friends belonged to many sects, and it was hardly to be expected that in small communities, composed mostly of the poor, a restraint not practised elsewhere would be found. At Lanark, he was absolute master. What he did for the people in his employment was so obviously done with a view to their welfare, that, so long as his partners consented, he could meet with no powerful opposition. In educating the children he carefully abstained from interference with religious views or prejudices. The

workers who knew him, and who had the utmost faith in his honesty of purpose, trusted him fully. The outside world did not know him so well, and therefore it was not unreasonable that his proceedings should be regarded with some degree of suspicion. The facts of his life were all in his favour ; but the suspicions that grow out of the common practices of the world were against him. He began to see clearly that the fight must come sooner or later ; to enter on it at once, therefore, was perhaps the wisest thing he could do.

Looking at the way it came, it cannot be regarded as a challenge by him to the prejudices of the world, but as an assault on him by the prejudiced and intolerant. Had he avoided meeting the attack, his position must have become worse rather than better, as the suspicions raised would have followed him, whatever he might have attempted, and in the end might have broken him down. At that time the Test and Corporation Acts were not repealed. In fact, the many injuries inflicted even through law for differences in creed, furnished proof that, however much we may fall short in true liberality now, our fathers, in the early portion of the present century, were much behind us in the liberality of thought that frankly acknowledges the right of difference in regard to religious opinions. Taking into consideration the opposition at the meeting of August the 14th, covert and open, political and religious, it was a great success. The amendments were negatived, but, on Mr Owen's motion, the meeting was adjourned to the 21st of the same month. Five resolutions had been passed, but as there were several others, and as he

had not said what he had desired to say in relation to the opposition he had encountered on religious grounds, this second meeting was looked forward to with so much interest by the public, that it was, says Owen, "densely crowded, although held at noon, and again hundreds and thousands had to be disappointed who could not gain admittance, and many waited till five o'clock before any moved to allow of their entrance, and even afterwards, until its dismissal at seven, it remained crowded."

CHAPTER XXIII.

His Religion.

It was important that Robert Owen should, if possible, clear out of his way the difficulties that had arisen in regard to his religious opinions. He had to decide whether he should publicly explain away views that were distasteful to many of his friends and supporters, and thus allay a threatened antagonism, or stand firmly on his own ground, meeting all attacks without permitting any doubt to exist as to the opinions he entertained of certain accepted beliefs, which he regarded not only as obstructive of good, but as abundantly productive of many evils, including division, hatred, and persecution, and as most mischievous in preventing the kindly alliance among men which was necessary for the promotion of the associative objects he had in view. He was not, nor did he ever pretend to be, a judge of differences in religious dogma; but he believed that it was the duty of men

to dwell together in peace, and labour earnestly as brethren in an intelligent consciousness of their common requirements, for the reasonable satisfaction of their common wants, and in an acknowledgment of their common duties.

There was in the position he assumed no hatred of old creeds. He neither disputed the right nor questioned the sincerity of those who taught or professed them. His wife was a zealous believer in the religion in which she was brought up, and he never disputed or interfered with her desire to educate his children in the creed she thought the best; and therefore when those who sought to injure his character inquired as to his habits and mode of life, they were informed that the Bible was regularly read in the New Lanark schools, and that in his house family prayer was a daily practice. He never disguised his opinions publicly or privately, where it was necessary to state them; but he never sought by authority, or by unseasonable and over-zealous argument, to force them on others. He did not undervalue speculations in regard to religious or any other kind of truth; but, considering the great main divisions into which men are separated, and the minor or sectarian sub-divisions in each of these, he did not expect that agreement could be easily brought about. He had, nevertheless, a strong belief that as men came to understand each other better, they would make a more generous allowance for these differences, and thus draw into their various creeds so much of charitable and kindly consideration, as might render their intercourse more productive of mutual goodwill and joint endeavour in promoting the happiness of all.

He considered that the various religious beliefs of the world were not voluntarily adopted, and could not be given up by any effort of the will; that the growth of knowledge led to improvement in religious thought, as the more that was known of the universe and its operations, the more elevated would be our human conceptions of the power and wisdom that "directs the atom and controls the aggregate of nature." The evil effect of holding men responsible for their opinions he studied in the grim story of religious wars and sectarian persecutions. He had learned how one infallibility sought to exterminate another by means of torture and death, for differences of opinion which perhaps neither of them understood; and he knew enough of the struggles for free thought in the world, to be horrified by the cruelties practised by the majority to strangle the new belief of the individual or the minority. It was impossible to make him understand that there were really such differences as justified persecution even to death. It is no wonder, therefore, that he regarded persecution on the ground of difference of creed as by far a worse crime than any possible error in doctrine; and believing as he did in the necessity of mutual goodwill among men, for the realising of their highest aims by joint effort, it appears natural that he should deprecate any doctrine that divided men from each other in bitterness of spirit.

It was because of the want of charity among men calling themselves Christians that he insisted so strongly on the doctrine of non-responsibility for belief. At that time the penal laws against the Roman Catholics were unrepealed, the laws against the eligibility of Dissenters to municipal office still

existed. Quakers were excluded from their rights as citizens, and Jews were regarded as unfit to be admitted to their civil privileges. The rack and the fagot had been laid aside, but the spirit of persecution was by no means dead. Every man who took any part in promoting freedom of thought felt this in his own person, and among these Robert Owen was soon made aware that in disturbing and seeking to destroy old prejudices, he was laying himself open to the attacks of bigots of every denomination.

He might have gone on explaining and denying, and excusing and apologising, if such a policy was to him possible, but it was not. He believed himself right, and he preferred saying this, and justifying himself, whatever might come of it. Michelet, in his "Life of Luther," describes the determination with which that reformer met the challenge of his enemies. Every argument was used to dissuade him from attending the Diet at Worms. "I will repair thither," he said, "though I should find there as many devils as there are tiles on the house-tops." Owen went to his meeting of 21st August 1817 in this spirit, quietly determined to do what he believed to be his duty. He described to those assembled the measures he suggested for improving the condition of the people, and then, addressing himself to the religious aspect of the question as it had been forced on him, said, "It may now be asked, if the new arrangements proposed really possess all the advantages that have been stated, why have they not been adopted in universal practice during all the ages that have passed? Why should so many countless millions of our fellow-creatures, through each successive generation, have been the

victims of ignorance, of superstition, of mental degradation, and of wretchedness? A more important question has never yet been put to the sons of men! Who can answer it? Who dare answer it but with his life in his hand,—a ready and willing victim to the truth, and to the emancipation of the world from its long bondage of disunion, error, crime, and misery? . . . Whatever may be the consequences, I will now perform my duty to you and to the world; and should it be the last act of my life, I shall be well content, and know that I have lived for an important purpose. Then, my friends, I tell you that hitherto you have been prevented from even knowing what happiness really is, solely by means of the errors, gross errors, that have been combined with the fundamental notions of every religion that has hitherto been taught to men, who in consequence have been made the most inconsistent and the most miserable beings in existence. By the errors of these systems, man has been made a weak imbecile animal, a furious bigot and fanatic, or a miserable hypocrite; and should these qualities be carried, not only into the projected villages, but into paradise itself, a paradise would be no longer found. In all the religions that have been hitherto forced on the minds of men, deep, dangerous, and lamentable principles of dissension, division, and separation, have been fast entwined with all their fundamental notions; and the certain consequences have been all the dire effects which religious animosities have, through all the past periods of the world, inflicted with such unrelenting stern severity, or mad and furious zeal. If, therefore, my friends, you should

carry with you into these proposed villages of intended unity and unlimited mutual co-operation, one single particle of religious intolerance or sectarian feeling of division and separation, maniacs only would go there to look for harmony and happiness, or elsewhere, as long as such insane errors shall be found to exist."

Having delivered himself thus, he added, "I am not going to ask impossibilities from you. I know what you can do; and I know also what you cannot do. Consider again on what ground each man in existence has a full right to the enjoyment of the most unlimited liberty of conscience. I am not of your religion, nor of any religion yet taught in the world. To me they all appear united with much—yes, with very much—error. Am I to blame for thinking thus? Those who possess any real knowledge of human nature know that I cannot think otherwise, that it is not in my power, of myself, to change the thoughts and ideas which appear to me to be true. Ignorance, bigotry, and superstition may again, as they have so often done before, attempt to force belief against conviction, and thus carry the correct-minded conscientious victim to the stake, or make a human being wretchedly insincere. Therefore, unless the world is now prepared to dismiss all its erroneous religious notions, and to feel the justice and necessity of publicly acknowledging the most unlimited religious freedom, it will be futile to erect villages of union and mutual co-operation; for it will be vain to look on this earth for inhabitants to occupy them, who can understand how to live in the bonds of peace and unity, or who can love their neighbour as

themselves, whether he be Jew or Gentile, Mohammedan or Pagan, Infidel or Christian. Any religion that creates one particle of feeling short of this is false, and must prove a curse to the whole human race."

I have given here, I think, the strongest form of Owen's infidelity. Beyond this I cannot find that he ever went. He attacked warmly and earnestly the belief that a man's religious opinions were under his own control and could be changed at will. This false supposition, as he considered it, led to uncharitableness of thought and to persecution ; it preyed on the minds of individuals, disturbed the peace of families, produced mischievous and cruel contentions between sects, and not unfrequently plunged nations into war. For this belief he had no mercy, as he considered it at all times the worst obstacle to human progress.

So far, therefore, as this may be considered an essential part of any religion, he may, without hesitation, be regarded as an unbeliever; but I have nowhere found in his works, or in his reported words, any attack on the accepted Christianity of the country. If classed at all, he would have been regarded as a Unitarian. Of Christ and His labours he always spoke with the most profound respect, and regarded His persecutions and death as the result of the error, in regard to the voluntary action of belief, which he so strongly and so constantly condemned. Perhaps there never was a man who regarded with greater dislike attacks on religious opinions or prejudices. He stood firmly on the right to think for himself and speak for himself on all matters, but he most frankly and sincerely insisted on the same right being accorded

to others. When what is now known as the Socialist movement was active in the work of propagandism, and when men of all shades of religious belief were encouraged to enter its ranks, many did so who were strict believers, though the majority were by no means of this character; but whatever their creed, or want of creed, they were made welcome if they could add what he called "religion of the new moral world" to such creed as they might profess. This religion, or whatever else it may be called, was simple, and had reference to practice rather than faith. It consisted in the unceasing effort to promote the happiness of every man, woman, and child, to the greatest possible extent, without regard to their class, sect, party, country, or colour. This simple creed was all that his followers were called on to believe in, and whatever they thought proper to join to this might be added without offence.

He published in later years his own personal ideas of the Deity, but they were only his own. He says he had been requested to state them, and he did so without any wish to dogmatise. His words are, that "human knowledge is not sufficiently advanced to enable us to state upon this subject more than probable conjectures, derived from those laws of nature which have been made known to us." That from these we deduce the following probable truths:—"That an eternal, uncaused existence has ever filled the universe, and is therefore omnipresent. That this eternal, uncaused, omnipresent existence possesses attributes to govern the universe as it is governed. That these attributes, being eternal and infinite, are powers which are incomprehensible to man. That

these eternal and infinite attributes are probably those laws of nature by which, at all times, in all places, the operations of the universe are incessantly continued. That it is of no importance whether men call this eternal, uncaused, omnipresent existence, matter or spirit, because names alter nothing, explain nothing, and man knows the forms and qualities of the existences around him only so far as his senses have been made to perceive them. That if this power had desired to make the nature of its existence known to man, it would have enabled him to comprehend it without mystery or doubt. That as this knowledge has not yet been given to or acquired by man, it is not essential to his wellbeing and happiness. That man is formed to be what he is by this power; and that the object of his existence is the attainment of happiness. That the power that made man cannot ever, in the slightest iota, be changed in its eternal course, by the request or prayer of so small and insignificant a being as man is when compared with the universe and its operations. That all dissensions among men on these mere speculative matters are the greatest mistakes that man has ever made, and are now the most formidable obstacles to his attainment of happiness—the ultimate object of his nature. That for the convenience of discourse it is necessary that some concise term should be adopted, by which to designate this eternal, uncaused, omnipresent power; and that the term God is perhaps as unexceptional for this purpose as any one word that can be employed; and it has the additional recommendation of general use in its favour."

To the question as to what is the duty of man to

this power, he replies, "That it is to attain the object of his existence; which is to be happy himself, to make his fellow-beings happy, and to endeavour to make the existence of all who are formed to feel pleasure and pain as delightful as his knowledge and power and their nature will admit." It may be necessary to make one remark here. Some of the words used may mislead if not interpreted as understood and used by him. For instance, the word "happiness" had with him no low, sensual meaning. It indicated the greatest good attainable by the fullest development and noblest use of the highest human faculties and powers.

CHAPTER XXIV.

His Trip to the Continent.

MR SARGANT, in his book "Robert Owen and his Philosophy," tells his readers that when Owen made his declaration on the subject of religious belief, it brought him "neglect, hatred, contempt, calumny, and all the ills that follow an excommunicated man." I shall offer no contradiction to this beyond that furnished by a statement of facts, especially as the censures in which this writer indulges may be classed among those which Owen himself treated with indifference.

The declaration was made on the 21st of August 1817, when no public steps of any importance had been taken to realise Owen's plans for the relief of

the poor. A considerable number of people had gathered around him, and some of these drew off when they found he was not a man of accommodating orthodoxies. Charities, and other public efforts into which benevolence entered, were in those days very frequently worked with a sectarian bias, and in that way obtained sectarian help. A number of people otherwise likely enough to help in Owen's movement, were no doubt strong sectarians, and of these many would naturally disconnect themselves with a man who so openly declared his opinions, not on religious dogma so much as on the persecuting tendencies and practices of those who, insisting on the voluntary nature of belief, held individuals responsible for their religious convictions, and hated and oppressed them in consequence.

But when all allowance has been made, to speak, as Mr Sargant does, of "neglect, hatred, contempt, calumny, and all the ills that follow an excommunicated man," falling on the head of Robert Owen, is worse than misleading. That men like Mr Sargant denounced him, may be true; equally so that they did so without being careful as to facts. To say that, "if he was the prince of cotton spinners, he was after all a cotton spinner,—a trader, who had fed himself fat on the practices he now pretended to decry," is a statement that must have been dictated simply by prejudice, as it was well known that Owen was not such a person. He never at any time pursued such a course. His proceedings were from the first based on a detestation of such practices, as was witnessed by hundreds of visitors, men of unimpeachable position and character, many of whom bore ample

testimony to results very different from those produced elsewhere by the practices Owen condemned. He never fed himself fat on the profits of his trade, but spent them to help forward the reforms he deemed so necessary. His reply to a similar charge, made by the Bishop of Exeter, may serve as answer to Mr Sargant, who made the above accusation ten years after the following statement had been published :—"I have always expended to the last shilling my surplus wealth in promoting this great and good cause, for funds have always been required to hasten its progress as I desired. The right reverend prelate is greatly deceived when he says, as he is reported to have said, that I had squandered my wealth in profligacy and luxury. I have never expended a pound in either; all my habits are habits of temperance in all things, and I challenge the right reverend prelate and all his abettors to prove the contrary, and I will give him and them the means of following me through every stage and month of my life."

Soon after his declaration, he visited France, in company with Professor Pictet. Pictet was a man of eminence, and had been sent by the Swiss Republic as envoy-extraordinary to the Congress of Vienna in 1814, and to that of Paris in 1815. Owen's principal object in this trip was to visit the establishment of M. de Fellenberg at Hofwyl, for the purpose of inspecting a system of instruction then famous all over Europe; and so greatly pleased was he by what he saw, that he arranged to send his two eldest boys there to complete their education.

At Paris he was well received, especially by Louis Philippe, then Duke of Orleans, to whom he carried

a letter of introduction from the Duke of Kent. He was introduced to the French prime-minister, who, being acquainted with his ideas, stated his conviction of their soundness, but pronounced them to be premature. In addition to this, he made the acquaintance of Alexander von Humboldt, and La Place. From Paris he went to Geneva, where he met with Sismondi; examined carefully the educational establishment of Father Oberlin at Friburg, and Pestalozzi at Yverdun. Then to Frankfort, where he prepared the memorials which he afterwards presented to the allied sovereigns assembled in congress at Aix-la-Chapelle.

Having arranged with Lord Castlereagh for the presentation of his memorials, he left Aix-la-Chapelle to return to Switzerland. He attended, by the invitation of M. Pictet, who was president, a meeting of the "Swiss National Society of Natural History," at Lausanne, and he explained his views by invitation of the meeting, after which he was unanimously elected an honorary member of the society. On reaching Paris, on his way to England, he was informed by a member of the French Administration that his memorials had been laid before the Congress at Aix-la-Chapelle, and had been very favourably received.

The first is entitled a "Memorial to the Governments of Europe and America, on Behalf of the Working Classes." It is dated 20th September 1818, and after stating the number of years over which his observations extended, he explains that he is not influenced by partiality or prejudice for or against any class, sect, party, or country. That he views the whole human race as men created with the same

general faculties and qualities, though varied in degree, and trained by circumstances over which society has control, to despise, hate, and oppose each other, even to death, when they might be trained to esteem, to love, and to aid each other. "The immediate causes," he goes on to say, "which make this change necessary, are the overwhelming effect of new scientific power and the rapid increase of knowledge among all classes of men. The former will soon render human labour of little avail in the creation of wealth; while the latter will make evident to the people the absolute necessity which has thus arisen for them to give a different direction to their powers, and will inform them, also, how the change is to be effected. To this day," the memorial says, "the means of consumption, or of obtaining the necessaries of life, by the working classes, have been acquired solely through the medium of their labour, the value of which the new power has already much diminished. And the certain consequences of the undirected progress of this power will be to reduce the value of manual labour, until it falls below the means of procuring a wretched subsistence for any large proportion of the working classes, while the remainder of them must be starved out of existence. Such is the nature of the contest, which has already continued for some time, and which now exists in full activity, between scientific power and manual labour; between knowledge and ignorance; but no one who comprehends anything of the subject can for one moment doubt the result."

The character and condition of the time must here be taken into account. Exhausting wars had been

carried on throughout Europe for more than a quarter of a century. Thousands of human lives had been sacrificed, and millions of money spent. Everything had been unsettled, whilst nothing had been permanently restored. During this time an enormous mechanical power had been developed and applied in Great Britain through a most fortunate concurrence of inventions, and by the security our insular position afforded. The first effect of this was to over-supply existing markets before new ones could be discovered, and hence a displacement of manual labour and a sudden increase of suffering among the masses of the people. This naturally led to discontent. While Owen was employed on his memorials, in England they were hanging Luddite rioters, and the Peterloo Massacre was only a few months distant.

The yet unsolved difficulty of how to turn the new mechanical producing power to the best account in the interest of society had scarcely been looked at except by Robert Owen.

It would, perhaps, be going too far to say that Robert Owen was right in all his speculations as to the true causes of the misery of the people; nor is it necessary to insist that he was absolutely correct in all the methods of reform he recommended. It may be claimed for him, however, that what he discovered to be wrong in the operations of our industrial system, as carried on in his day, was fairly and perseveringly investigated, and temperately and practically brought under the attention of those whose duty it was to correct it. And it is but the simplest truth to assert, that before he suggested anything, he carefully made his experiments, so that his recommendations might

be sustained by proof. His appeals were not made to the people, with the view of forcing the reforms he advocated, by rousing their passions or by reliance on the fears popular anger might excite. He appealed to those who were doing the wrong, that they might understand the danger they were incurring; and he appealed to the Government, that, as a matter of public policy, such regulations might be enforced as would secure the country against the evils to which he pointed. He was the first man who, with any comprehensive grasp of the subject, insisted that the relations of labour and capital should be thoroughly examined with a view to their rectification. The methods of improvement suggested by him in regard to the factory system have had to be followed, and the changes that have been effected by years of agitation, were what, at the commencement, he asked our law-makers to sanction.

CHAPTER XXV.

Operations in London.—Owen's Position.

In the April of this year (1819) Robert Owen issued his first appeal to the working classes, in an address published in the *Star* newspaper. In referring to those who were declaring that, though true in theory, his proposals were not practicable, he said this meant no more than that those who came to this conclusion were unable to reduce them to practice,—they hastily decided without sufficient data, and "would have

made the same random assertions respecting any of the great improvements in science prior to their introduction. Such individuals forget that it is a modern invention, to enable one man, with the aid of a little steam, to perform the labour of a thousand men."

It is noticeable that in this address there is not any touch of the demagogue. The oppressions of the people, as an outcome of power tyrannically used, are not alluded to, nor is there reference to any question that might in an angry spirit excite "class against class." On the contrary, his first plea is for mutual toleration. "You have been filled," he says, "with all uncharitableness, and have in consequence cherished feelings of anger towards your fellow-men who have been placed in opposition to your interests. These feelings of anger must be withdrawn before any being who has your real interest at heart can place power in your hands. You must be made to know yourselves, by which means alone you can discover what other men are. You will then distinctly perceive that no rational ground for anger exists, even against those who, by the errors of the present system, have been made your greatest oppressors and your most bitter enemies. An endless multiplicity of circumstances, over which you had not the smallest control, placed you where you are, and as you are. In the same manner, others of your fellow-men have been formed by circumstances, equally uncontrollable by them, to become your enemies and grievous oppressors. In strict justice, they are no more to be blamed for these results than you are, nor you than they; and, splendid as their exterior may be, this state of matters often

causes them to suffer even more poignantly than you. They have therefore an interest, strong as yours, in the change which is about to commence for the equal benefit of all, provided you do not create a more formidable counteracting interest on their parts, of which the result must be to prolong existing misery, and to retard the public good."

He goes on to tell them, that if they cannot comprehend the truth of this doctrine of circumstances, the time has not come for their deliverance. "Had the upper classes been permitted to discover what human nature really is, they would have known long ago that by being raised, as it is termed, to the privileged ranks, they are placed in circumstances which render their successors, except by some extraordinary chance, increasingly useless to themselves and to society." They are, he says, "trained from the cradle to take pride in themselves for pursuing measures which deprive the great mass of mankind of the most essential benefits that belong to human nature, in order that they, a most insignificant part in point of numbers, may be distinguished by advantages over their fellows. The feelings," he continues, "which this absurd conduct generates throughout society, keep the whole population of the world in a lower degree of enjoyment and rationality than most of the animal creation. They are the very essence of ignorant selfishness."

There is neither hesitation nor compromise in these words; but disbelieving, as he did, in the efficacy of anger or violence, he adds:—"The privileged classes of the present day throughout Europe are not influenced so much by a desire to keep you down, as by an

anxiety to retain the means of securing to themselves a comfortable and respectable enjoyment of life. Let them distinctly perceive that the ameliorations which you are about to experience are not intended or calculated to inflict any real injury on them or their posterity, but, on the contrary, that the same measures which will improve you must, as they assuredly will, essentially benefit them, and raise them in the scale of happiness and intellectual enjoyment, and you will speedily have their co-operation to carry the contemplated arrangements into effect."

In the state of parties then existing, such language as this displays an over-sanguineness of belief in the efficacy of his plans, and it may be admitted that he was sanguine; but he had a certain groundwork of justification for this, which must not be overlooked. As has already been stated, his practical experiment had at this time attracted the attention of vast numbers of people, a large proportion of whom were persons of position and influence. His eldest son, Robert Dale Owen, in his book, "Threading My Way," says, "I have seen as many as seventy persons in the building at one time. The number of names recorded in our visitors' book, from the year 1815 to 1825, was nearly 20,000," whilst at the time Owen's address to the working classes was penned, a committee appointed to investigate and report on his plan for providing for the poor by the creation of industrial villages, contained the names of the Dukes of Kent, Sussex, Bedford, and Portland; the Archbishop of Canterbury; the Bishops of London, Peterborough, and Carlisle; the Marquis of Huntly; Lords Grosvenor, Carnarvon, Granville, Westmorland, Shaftesbury, and

Manners; General Sir Thomas Dyce and General Brown, besides those of the following members of the House of Commons:—Messrs Smith, Ricardo, De Crespigny, Wilberforce, Joseph Butterworth, and Sir T. Baring.

In this year also a committee was appointed by the guardians of the poor at Leeds, for the purpose of inquiring into the causes of the "present increase of pauperism," and "whether the existing evil, as to its causes, be of a complexion merely temporary, and may be supposed soon to right itself;" or "whether it may not be prudent, in case the causes that induce the evil be permanent, to inquire into the best means of finding a more productive source of labour for the unemployed poor." This committee appointed a deputation to visit New Lanark, to examine and report upon the successful operations of Owen for improving the character and condition of the work-people. This deputation consisted of Mr Edward Baines, afterwards member of Parliament for the borough, and father of the present Sir Edward, a Dissenter; Robert Oastler, father of Richard, so well known for his subsequent exertions on behalf of the factory children; and John Cawood, a respected member of the Established Church. The first paragraph of their report runs thus:—"Mr Owen's establishment at Lanark is essentially a manufacturing establishment, conducted in a manner superior to any other the deputation ever witnessed, and dispensing more happiness than perhaps any other institution in the kingdom where so many poor persons are employed, and is founded on an admirable system of moral regulation." In regard to the education of the young,

the report says:—" In the education of the children, the thing that is most remarkable is the general spirit of kindness and affection which is shown towards them, and the entire absence of everything that is likely to give them bad habits, with the presence of whatever is calculated to inspire them with good ones; the consequence is that they appear like one well-regulated family—united together by ties of the closest affection. We heard no quarrels, from the youngest to the eldest; and so strongly impressed are they with the conviction that their interest and duty are the same, and that to be happy themselves it is necessary to make those happy by whom they are surrounded, that they had no strife but in offices of kindness." Of the boys and girls, from ten to seventeen, it is said:—" These are all employed in the mill, and in the evening, from seven to half-past eight, they pursue that system of education to which their attention has, up to ten years of age, been directed in the day time." In regard to the adult population, the report adds:—" In general, they appear clean, healthy, and sober; intoxication, the parent of so many vices and so much misery, is indeed almost unknown here. The consequence is that they are well clad and well fed, and their dwellings are inviting." At the time when, as Mr Sargant informs us, Owen was being shunned by his countrymen, and treated with "neglect, hatred, contempt, and all the ills that follow an excommunicated man," for his attacks on religion, this Leeds deputation wrote of his service to religion in the following terms:—" The Scotch character has in it, no doubt, something that disposes to a more exemplary observance of the Sabbath than is generally to

be met with in England; but this circumstance apart, it is quite manifest that the New Lanark system has a tendency to improve the religious character; and so groundless are the apprehensions expressed, on the score of religion suffering injury by the prevalence of these establishments, that we accord with Mr Owen in his assertion, that the inhabitants of that place form a more religious community than any manufacturing establishment in the United Kingdom." The report continues:—"For this well-regulated colony, where almost everything is made that is wanted by either the manufactory or its inhabitants, no cursing or swearing is anywhere to be heard. There are no quarrelsome men or brawling women."

The deputation, after describing the New Lanark establishment, expressed something like regret that the law and the necessity of obtaining public sanction were obstacles to such an attempt in the neighbourhood of Leeds, but strongly recommended that something like Owen's plan should be applied to the orphan children. The success of his action at New Lanark, the interest taken in his proceedings in London, and the evidence of approval with which he was everywhere met, might induce a temperament so sanguine as his to hope for more than was realisable; but, though an accurate estimate of probabilities is in all cases desirable, yet, with the encouragement he received from men who, had their zeal been equal to his own, might have secured the triumph of the reforms for which he strove, it is not surprising if his expectations outran the means of accomplishment. Mr Sargant's account of the way Owen was treated is ludicrously exaggerated, yet there was an activity

of misrepresentation and depreciation which, being used for that purpose, in time prejudiced the general public against him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

His Correspondence with the Duke of Kent.

THE book of Dr Henry Grey Macnab, physician to the Duke of Kent, and employed by him to visit and report upon the establishment at New Lanark, is perhaps the fairest in spirit and fullest in detail of any work written concerning Robert Owen. He examined carefully the ideas of Owen, and objected to what appeared to him unsound, with the result of obtaining explanations where differences in interpretation of terms and phrases had led to misunderstandings. Many of the utterances of Owen were not given with strict regard to the precise meaning of the words used. Indeed, seeing that his early education was limited in its range and brief in its duration, an exact and scholarly style was not to be looked for; but allowing for this, his conversation was lucid, and in writing he expressed himself in plain and vigorous language. Dr Macnab was not prepared to admit that Owen's doctrine of the formation of character was absolutely true. He admitted that, considered generally, it was indisputable that language, religion, general habits, customs, and modes of thinking were due to surrounding influences acting on the young from birth up, but he believed in special thought and action being under the control of

the individual will. A mere dogmatist at the head of a sect would not have permitted any alteration in the wording of what he had formulated; but Owen authorised Dr Macnab to state, in explaining his views, that in the existing condition of society it would be sufficient "to regard as a truth that the characters of the *generality* of mankind are *chiefly* formed by the good or bad education they receive, and the circumstances in which they are placed." This, no doubt, appeared to him as a sufficient compromise to secure co-operation for the attainment of the end he had in view, and this with him was always one of the most important of considerations.

It was a rule with Robert Owen not to stand in the way of attainable good by insisting on unattainable conditions of action,—never to postpone what may be done, because all that is sought cannot be obtained at once. It is true that in explaining his principles, he never attempted to disguise or to suppress anything. Yet, however far-reaching his principles, he was ever ready to begin humbly, and to proceed step by step, if the small beginnings gave promise of success. He was quite willing to proceed "bit by bit," provided that he was asked to do nothing contradictory or dangerous to his general plans. His success at New Lanark was the result of experiment following upon experiment over a long series of years, but the ground was always carefully prepared, and each experiment well thought out in principle and detail before it was commenced. When, however, he had to obtain the approval and help of others in all he planned and attempted, the case became altered, as success or failure depended on others rather than on himself. But he was not a

bigoted, dogmatical, or reckless experimenter. What he sought was the hearty co-operation of earnest men, and to obtain this he was always willing to concede anything that might tend to the success of his projects without compromising his principles.

The Duke of Kent, who had made himself thoroughly acquainted with Owen's character, and who also caused the fullest and most searching inquiries to be made as to the nature of his proceedings, appears to have treated him upon all occasions with unusual respect and confidence. Writing from Kensington Palace, 18th July 1819, he says:—

"I am happy to find that you have fixed the general meeting for the 26th, on which occasion I shall certainly endeavour to discharge the duties of the chair to the utmost of my poor abilities, and to satisfy you and your friends as well as the public that I have a most sincere wish that a fair trial should be given to your system, of which I have never hesitated to acknowledge myself an admirer, though I was well aware to set it going that we should have a great deal of prejudice to combat; and that in order to make a beginning many points must necessarily be conceded. . . . I think it right to mention that my illustrious friend and relative, Prince Leopold, goes to Scotland next month, and has promised me faithfully to visit the establishment at Lanark. Were it not for my domestic engagements I should willingly do the same; and I shall envy him his good fortune until I am able to accomplish it."

On the 13th September, the Duke wrote to Owen a long letter concerning his income, his marriage, and expenditure, giving a number of details, including

plans for the future in regard to himself and his family, and concluding thus :—

" I have now said enough of myself, and shall just add that I received a summons to attend your committee on Thursday afternoon on my return from Oatlands, which gave me only an hour's notice, and therefore I was unable to comply with it. I rejoice to hear that so many persons of respectability are visiting New Lanark this year, to which number I should certainly have added myself but for my unwillingness to absent myself from the Duchess, and the impossibility of her undertaking the journey with me at present. I wish, however, that in addition to Sir William De Crespigny, some other members of the House of Commons, possessing equally philanthropic feelings, but of the other political party, might be induced to do the same ; and this I mention with the view of Parliament taking up the matter seriously next session. At all events, I trust my illustrious relative, Prince Leopold, will not fail to fulfil his promise, in which case I am confident the result cannot fail of being most satisfactory to him."

Writing from Kensington Palace again on the 2nd October, the Duke says :—

" As to myself, you know how sincerely I am engaged in the cause, and if any measures are to be taken in Parliament with respect to it, which should render it indispensably necessary that I should be able to vouch for facts from having had ocular demonstration of them, I shall not hesitate—although we intend wintering in the west, in order that the Duchess may have the benefit of tepid sea bathing, and our infant that of sea air, on the fine coast of

Devonshire, during the months of the year that are so odious in London—to post down to Scotland for the purpose; and if the Duchess's health continues good, and there is no cause to render her travelling imprudent, I have no doubt but she will most readily accompany me. In the meanwhile, I am delighted to find that you have so many visits from individuals whose suffrages will be of importance; the more your establishment is seen, the more I am convinced it must carry with it the full and entire approval of every benevolent heart. With regard to Dr Macnab I consider him as a kindred soul with your own, and am delighted to perceive that you appreciate him, as I thought you would. I long to see him on his return to hear a full report of his visit to you, as it was entirely undertaken at my suggestion; and from his letters I perceive the result has been to render him quite enthusiastic as to what you have accomplished, and what he foresees may be accomplished if once we can succeed in carrying the public opinion with us. Wishing you health to continue your zealous exertions for the good of mankind, I beg to subscribe myself, with sentiments of friendship and esteem, my dear sir, yours faithfully, EDWARD."

I shall give one more communication of His Royal Highness. It shows how very zealous he was in the interest of the masses of the working people, how open in his communications, and how cordial and friendly with Owen personally:—

"KENSINGTON PALACE, 31*st October* 1819.

"MY DEAR OWEN,—Having been absent four days on a visit to the coast of Devonshire to fix upon a

house where we could cheat the early part of the approaching winter, I did not receive till late on Thursday night your favour of the 19th, since which I have been so overwhelmed with business as scarcely to have been able to find a moment to devote to you; I will not, however, suffer to-morrow's mail to depart without just answering your kind and interesting communication.

"I was delighted to perceive you had the visit of General Desseaux, and I look forward with pleasure to hear him converse upon your establishment. Pray express to Lady Mary Ross, whose brother, Lord Robert Fitzgerald, is a particular friend of mine, how grateful the Duchess and myself feel for the kind offer of her house in your vicinity in case we should be enabled to pay you a visit during the period of her absence in South Britain; but as there is an absolute necessity that the Duchess should take tepid sea baths in the first instance at Sidmouth, which have been strongly advised by her medical attendant, to strengthen her health after her confinement and nursing, I fear, with every wish on both our parts to do so, we shall not be able to avail ourselves of it, at least for the present year.

"At the same time, I cannot deny that your tempting offer would be a strong inducement to undertake the journey were we not so circumstanced at present as to preclude almost the possibility of thinking of it. But though this pleasure must be deferred, I by no means think of giving it up. On the contrary, I look forward with pleasure to realising it at a future day. I congratulate you upon having had a visit from some of the particular friends of Mrs

Fry, as I am sure they can only have gone to New Lanark with motives of benevolence. I think it also extremely fortunate that the celebrated Mr Ellis, of Kent, has determined upon viewing your establishment in person; for it is the opinion of such valuable men as he is which, if favourable, must give strength to the cause. Lord Torrington, who is to accompany him, is certainly a very worthy, well-meaning man, but I am afraid you will not find the judgment that you will in his travelling companion. However, it is a satisfaction to find that one nobleman has thought it worth his while to undertake the journey; and I hope his example will be followed by a great many more, being satisfied that nothing can tend so much to establish a conviction of all the good that may result from forming establishments upon your principles as ocular demonstration. And I say this with the more feeling, being strongly impressed, like you, with the belief that the change contemplated for the relief of the suffering poor of the country must indeed be made more speedily and generally than many seem to anticipate, if the object is to restore the country to a state of order and tranquillity before it is too late.

"My only fear is that ministers, having chosen to draw the sword, will turn a deaf ear to the representations of those who, from motives of benevolence, like yourself, and viewing the matter with unbiassed judgment, would adopt measures of a totally different tendency. It may be right to apprise you that I recently received the enclosed papers from Mr Bourne, who certainly is a most zealous and active member of the committee, but, after having so long adjourned our meetings, I should like to have your opinion upon

his suggestions before we act upon them. Pray write by return of post, your doing which will, I apprehend, enable me to hear from you on the 9th, or at latest on the 10th of November; and in the meanwhile, believe me ever to remain, with the most friendly regard, my dear Owen, yours faithfully, EDWARD."

The Duke presided as chairman of the London general committee on the first of December 1819, and died with unexpected suddenness on the 23rd of January 1820. This was a loss as serious as it was unexpected to Owen. Mr Sargant* thinks that by his sudden death the Duke was rescued from the "odium which he was incurring as the zealous advocate of views grossly tainted with infidelity, and saved from that contempt which the unthinking world is apt to bestow on Utopian schemes earnestly pursued." Owen's schemes at this time concerned the regulation of labour in the factories of the country; the establishment of industrial villages for the improvement of the condition of the poor, and for bettering the position of the working classes generally, and both these objects may have been Utopian. As a security for the peace of these villages, he condemned those old responsibilities for religious belief which had caused so much persecution; but this can hardly be regarded as gross infidelity, for which the Duke of Kent would have incurred "odium" and "contempt." In a country like England, where freedom of thought is an inheritance, and where new industrial developments were at the time referred to producing the misery they ought to have been in-

* "Robert Owen and his Philosophy," p. 158.

strumental in preventing, to say this raises a suspicion that Mr Sargant partakes largely of the spirit that visits with the penalty indicated efforts honestly made in the interest of those who suffer through ignorance and want.

Mr Sargant says that, after the death of the Duke of Kent, "Owen was left without any prominent disciples in England." Yet when the "British and Foreign Philanthropic Society" met in the June of 1822, at the Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street, the following names appeared on the list of vice-presidents:—His Excellency Count De Lieven, Russian Ambassador; Viscount De Chateaubriand, French Ambassador; Don Luis de Onis, Spanish Minister; Baron De Werther, Prussian Minister; Richard Rush, American Minister; Baron De Stierneld, Swedish Minister; Count De Ludolf, Sicilian Minister; Count St Martin D'Aglie, Sardinian Minister; Baron Langsdorf, Resident Minister for Baden and Hesse; M. De Moraes Sarmento, Chargé d'Affaires, Portugal; the Right Honourable the Earl of Lonsdale, Earl of Blessington, Lord Archibald Hamilton, Lord Viscount Torrington, Lord Viscount Exmouth, Lord Nugent, Duc de Broglie, Baron de Stael, and John Randolph, Esq., Virginia, U.S. The acting committee for the year 1822 contained the names of fifteen members of Parliament. A list of subscriptions and loans appended to a report of a meeting of this society, held on the 1st of June 1822, includes the following:—A. J. Hamilton, £5,000; James Morrison, £5,000; John Smith, M.P., £1,250; George Smith, M.P., £625; Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, £250; J. M. Morgan, £500; Sir Charles Grey, Bengal, £500; Geo. Dawson

M.P., £250; Henry Jones, Devon, £5,000; General Brown, London, £1,250; M. Rothschild, London, £250; Mrs Rathbone, Liverpool, £1,000; Anthony Clapham, Newcastle, £1,000; W. Foster Reynolds, £500; Robert Owen, New Lanark, £10,000; William and Joseph Strutt, Derby, £5,000. The list of smaller sums is a long one. Altogether, over £55,000 was subscribed.

These subscriptions were not called in, as the above sum was not sufficient for the commencement of an experiment such as was contemplated. There was nothing proved by this effort except that Robert Owen had a large number of enthusiastic friends, who were interested in the success of his plans, and who offered to subscribe liberally in order that a well-considered experiment might be made. But they were not numerous enough to subscribe the amount needed, and were therefore compelled to abandon an attempt which, between that period and the introduction of the Poor Law Amendment Acts, might, if fairly successful, have saved the owners of property many millions sterling which had to be paid in consequence of a maladministration of the poor laws.

CHAPTER XXVII.

His Disposition and Public Teaching.

Robert Owen was over strong in his belief that truth spoken out frankly, in the interest of those to whom it was addressed, must in the end command

acceptance and support. He did not make sufficient allowance for habit, prejudice, self-interest, individual ambition, and a multitude of minor but nevertheless powerful influences by which men are moved. He saw the success he had achieved in New Lanark, shut in with his people from the world and its ordinary influences. His own influence there was predominant, and it was felt by the people to be wisely exercised. His plans might not always have been understood, but his motives could not be called in question, while the results were always beneficial to the people and profitable to the employers.

He did not achieve success through a series of blunders that brought suffering or loss to others ; on the contrary, every step was successful, so much so that mistakes in management, such as would have interfered with commercial success, were never alleged against him. The disputes through which he had to separate from his three sets of partners were chiefly as to the methods of appropriating profits. The first two sets believed that too much was done for the workers at their expense, while the last set, as represented by William Allen, made the conflict one of an interference arising out of a prejudice and self-opinion which could not but be fatal to Owen's plans.

Owen did not abandon the good work he was engaged in at New Lanark in consequence of any ambitious desire to become a public teacher, but when his partners not only supported William Allen, but also sent a teacher to his schools that this opposition might have practical effect, he could not remain. Besides, coincidently with this, the attempts made in London by the Philanthropic Society had broken

down. The necessary money could not be obtained, and therefore the only hope that could reasonably exist in his mind, was that the working people might be induced to take the matter up for themselves, if they could be brought to understand the evils from which they were suffering, and to exert the power they possessed to apply the proper remedy.

At this point in his career, two courses were open to him,—either to retire, and live in ease and comparative luxury on the fortune he had made; or to enter on a work of public teaching, with the view of bringing the working portion of the population to share his convictions, and causing them to take an active part in the working out of their own regeneration. When asked, subsequently, why he decided to abandon the tranquillity of private life for the trouble and calumny attending an active warfare against established injustice, he replied, that whatever the blessings of retirement, he felt he could not live simply for himself; he knew, he said, from what needless miseries the poor suffered, and thinking of these would make happiness impossible to him, unless he laboured to make them less.

When he retired from New Lanark, it was not to rest, but to work in one of the most painful situations a man unused to public warfare could occupy. The people—the poor who suffered—did not understand him; and though he had among them many devoted adherents, all the support and encouragement they could give him was as nothing to the abuse, misrepresentation, and opposition that came from those who regarded him as an enemy to society, for the reason that he protested against the continuance of a system

which condemned the masses of the people to poverty, ignorance, and suffering; as well as from considerable numbers of persons who looked on him as an enemy to religion, because he denied the voluntary nature of belief, and condemned the discords and persecutions that originated in the acceptance of an idea which he considered a gross and mischievous error.

It is generally believed that he was not sufficiently equipped at all points for such a combat as he challenged when he entered the field, and this to a certain extent is true. He understood his general principles with singular clearness. He had made himself thoroughly familiar with the evils against which he contended, and no man could deal better with the objections that were generally made to his proposals. His manner was manly, straightforward, and dignified. What the late Lord Brougham (then Mr Henry Brougham) said of him in the House of Commons, in the debate on Sir William De Crespigny's motion for inquiry into Owen's plans, in the December of 1820, was strictly correct:— "Of Mr Owen, he did not hesitate to state his conviction that a more honest, amiable, and simple-minded man was not to be found on the face of the earth. He was indeed a rare character, for, though a projector, he was candid to a degree that he (Mr Brougham) could not have believed had he not himself had personal experience of that candour. Let a person treat his projects as severely as he pleased, Mr Owen was never irritated, never offended, because truth only was the object he had in view."

He needed all this candour and calmness to carry him through the trial before him. Such conflicts as

he was entering on had always been fought without much regard for candour or forbearance on any side, and with an overabundance of charges and proofs in which truth was not the first or principal consideration. Beyond all things, Owen sought to avoid making angry charges, and the heaping of blame on the heads of those who might defend existing abuses. He had a horror of such a mode of warfare, as alike unjust and ineffectual. He hated retaliations of evil, because he believed that most of the wrong men did to each other was done through ignorance and misunderstanding, not from evil intention, and therefore that angry condemnations were to be avoided above all things by those who took upon themselves the work of reform. In fact, he regarded the chief part of the law-making, law-breaking, law-enforcing business of the world as a kind of inevitable Walpurgus revel, that must be continued until men saw their way to a wise education of the young, and to such an equitable distribution of the fruits of the country's industry as would secure all from "want or the fear of want," and thus check an over-eager and injurious pursuit of individual gain, and, at the same time, tend to remove the many temptations to crime arising from poverty, ignorance, and evil example.

For some years before Owen left New Lanark, and for many years afterwards, the state of England, considering the means at the disposal of those who governed its affairs, was most deplorable. There was division and strife arising out of vexatious intermeddling with freedom of worship. There was an active fermentation of political discontent among the masses of the people, in consequence of an irritating

and obstinate denial of political justice, partially checked by the Reform Act of 1832. There was also a widespread poverty, which created demands on property through the poor-laws, which were rapidly depriving land of its value, and thus dragging its owners into complications of distress from which they saw no means of escape. In addition, there was a vigorous demand for a free and untaxed press, and for a further extension of popular rights than had been obtained in 1832; and an increasing agitation for a repeal of the corn laws, sustained by cries of suffering from the masses of the people. These things were liable at any moment to occasion acts of revolt against the authority of Government, such as might have taxed its strength and resources to the uttermost.

Owen's principles were principles of peace. They could only be thought out or worked out apart from excitement and violence. Popular excitement was calculated to in every way hinder the progress it was his most earnest desire to make. For this reason, if for no other, he was a steadfast and determined enemy to violence, and hence the publications first put forth by those who gathered round him take for granted, not the impossibility perhaps, but certainly the folly, of attempting the work Owen had outlined otherwise than in a spirit of peace and regard for the interest of all. The times were dangerous. Public anger was strong and widely spread; the passions of the people easily moved; and, as Owen's protests were directed against the evils that existed in the country, both social and political, he might have started an agitation that, vigorously conducted, would have aroused popular fury in every corner of the land.

It ought to be remembered to Owen's credit, that he never lost an opportunity of condemning personal or class invective, and of impressing on the minds of his supporters that they were acting in opposition to his principles when they said or did anything in condemnation of individual men. The work to be done was a positive work, a new foundation, and this he felt could not be effected by denunciation, by rousing prejudices, or by outstepping the bounds of peace or legality. He did not believe that the emancipation of the human race was not worth fighting for, but rather that there were other and far better ways of obtaining it, and that it was the people's duty to adopt these. Liberty of thought and speech was what he asked for, and this once granted, he never doubted that the accomplishment of desirable ends must follow. In this conviction he strove to secure liberty of speech, and to promote an activity in the direction of wise reform, such as would make free speech and free action in the interest of progress a foremost necessity among men. When through any indiscretion his followers got into trouble with the authorities, he maintained it was by acting in opposition to the well-understood policy and express instructions of the association and its directors. At a time of widespread popular discontent, and, it may be added, of real danger to the peace of the country, the Socialists of England considered it a duty to calm public excitement ; to explain the mistakes by which misery and suffering were produced ; to devise and recommend remedies involving injury to no man or class of men, and free from conflict with any political party.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Visits Holkham, and stands for Parliament.

OWEN'S life, as already stated, derives its chief interest from his continuous efforts to permanently improve the condition of the masses of the people. It has been alleged that he theorised and talked too much, and this can, with some plausibility, be supported by reference to his plans, if at the same time due reference be omitted to the practical work he performed in order to test his ideas.

The subject he undertook to deal with, was difficult to understand thoroughly without ample time for experiment; it was so vast in its connection with various conditions of human life, and the way in which human happiness could best be promoted by improved education, and by a better treatment of the working population of the country. His theories in regard to education, and the conduct of business, were formed on the observation and study of his early life; and his many years of practical labour, and the proof derived from this, left no doubt in his mind that a most important work for the improvement of society might be entered on at once. In this belief, he set himself to convince the public that no time should be lost if society were to be saved from the ignorance, poverty, and misery then afflicting it almost beyond endurance. It can hardly be brought as a charge against Owen, that, after practically testing his ideas, he was anxious to produce in the minds of others the conviction that existed in his own, though in striving

to do so he did not escape the rash and uncharitable judgments of the cheaply virtuous; indeed, it is curious to observe with what bitterness some of those who have dealt with his public proceedings have assailed him. Vanity, love of notoriety, quackery, hatred of religion, allied to a kind of diseased benevolence, are stated to be his most prominent characteristics, by writers from whose professions of liberality something more in accordance with truth and candour might have been expected.

From the time Robert Owen left New Lanark up to the time when he became actively engaged in forming and arousing public opinion, his work seems to have been preparatory rather than progressive. He visited Holkham, by invitation of Mr Coke, and spoke at a meeting of agriculturists. His speech, when his health had been drunk, was condensed and to the point. After thanking the company for the honour done him, he "regretted that he had been destined to differ essentially in principle from gentlemen for whom he entertained the highest regard and most sincere friendship; but as he conscientiously differed from them, and knew there could be no advantageous intercourse between any parties when differences could not be freely expressed, he should, as an act of imperative duty, which he felt himself called on to perform, state wherein his sentiments concerning public distress were not in unison with those of the gentlemen present. He could not be callous to the unwearied exertions of his honourable friend (Mr Coke), or to the praiseworthy attempts of many of the gentlemen present to reduce the public expenditure of the country within just and proper limits.

Economy in the application of public funds would ever continue to be a most valuable principle to act upon, and, as such, it should at all times receive his approbation and support; but he could not agree with those gentlemen who thought that a reduction of our public expenditure, or a reform in the Commons House of Parliament, could, under the new and extraordinary circumstances in which this country and the world were placed, give us that prosperity we sought, or which the late improvements in machinery, opening a mine of inexhaustible wealth to all the inhabitants of the world, now so justly entitle us to expect."

In the above words Owen expresses that which, though true, stood much in his way as a reformer. He was strongly impressed with the belief that it was little better than waste of time to correct the evils of society by temporary expedients. He forgot that society was divided into sections of believers in such expedients, and that he was placing such persons in opposition to him. It was certainly true that the settlement of the questions then before the country, could not relieve the people from what they were suffering, yet it is just as true that most of them were measures of justice, tending to promote good government and prepare the way for those bolder proposals that went more thoroughly to the root of the evil. He was friendly to economy in the expenditure of the public funds, and to reform in the House of Commons, but he offended those who specially championed these, and got credit for being an enemy rather than a friend. In this he made a mistake, as by so doing he lost the support of large

numbers of men who would have gone heartily with him, had he—whilst approving of the work in which they were engaged—refrained from a depreciation of its value, and taken advantage of their friendliness to him, as a reformer, in obtaining their aid for promoting the work he himself had in hand. There is nothing truer than that retrenchment in expenditure and reformation in Parliamentary representation have done much good, but not of the kind or to the extent the people expected ; and it is certain that those who were most sanguine and unreasonable in their expectations, have, in many cases, ceased to be reformers in consequence of their disappointments. This is unwise. Curtailment of an unwise and corrupt expenditure is a good in itself. The extension of the suffrage is good in itself, because it sustains and carries forward the nation by the intelligence and efforts of the people,—not by a class of the people; and this is but a preparation, perhaps a necessary preparation, before reforms such as those proposed by Owen, which require public spirit and public virtue to sustain them, can come generally into operation. At this Holkham meeting, after pointing out how a superabundance of everything required by the people might be obtained, he urged, in illustration of his argument, the management of the estate of his host, Mr Coke :—" He found the property, when he received it from his predecessor, a barren sandy waste, almost without cultivation or inhabitants, and the few of the latter which it contained were often fed with food imported from other soils and districts. It was rented at three shillings an acre, and the farmers in possession of it would not venture to give

five shillings an acre for the renewal of a long lease. At that time it might have been said of this beautiful domain that it was over-peopled, that there was such an excess of population that they could not be supported from the soil, and that every addition to the number would be an evil, because they must either starve or emigrate. Is not this the language now applied by those who have great authority among us, whose opinions influence public affairs, when they describe the situation of the British empire? and are the sentiments more just in the one case than in the other? I contend they are not, and that the British empire is, at this moment, the waste and wild that Holkham was; that it is equally destitute of the number of inhabitants that it is competent to support advantageously for the land, the landed proprietor, the freeholder, and the industrious part of the community; and to make this now suffering, complaining, and wretched country a second Garden of Eden, to enable it to support in high comfort a population five, nay, tenfold its present number, all that is necessary is closely to follow, as statesmen, the example of Mr Coke as a landlord and agriculturist. He found Holkham waste and wild, and the few inhabitants it kept, poor and ignorant. You now see what it is,—a domain unrivalled in many respects by any other in the world, and the inhabitants are increased sixfold, living in a degree of comfort that must delight every one who has examined their residences and enjoyed their good cheer, as many of us have done. Our statesmen have only to follow the example thus commenced. Let the subjects of the empire be governed with paternal kindness, such as we see

exercised here; let them be instructed in valuable practical knowledge, as the tenants of this estate have been; let their powers of activity sedulously have a full scope, as these have had, unrestrained by ignorant clauses and conditions which injure landlord and tenant; let them be encouraged freely to expend their capital in substantial permanent improvement, or let it be expended by the landlord for them, as we hear has often been done here; the proprietor receiving ample interest for such expenditure, and then production will far outstrip any increase of population, or the wants of production; but above all, let our legislators follow Mr Coke's example in allowing the producers of his wealth to have a fair and liberal proportion of that which they create."

A long speech by Robert Owen in explanation of his principles, would have been out of place at such a gathering as the one at Holkham. The position was most interesting. Owen, at Lanark, had proved what could be done on behalf of the factory-workers of the country, were the factory-owners disposed to take a humane interest in the welfare of the people in their employment. He had made evident what mighty results for good could be brought about, if the improvement of the worker was accepted as an important part of the duty of the factory proprietor; and at this meeting he had to address country gentlemen and farmers in reference to an experiment connected with the land. An intelligent, public-spirited, and humane man had not only improved his land up to a condition in which it supported its own inhabitants, which it had not done before, but had increased these sixfold, at the same time adding to the wealth

and comfort of the people to an extent almost incredible. Two experimenters, one in manufacturing industry, and one on the land, had given an example to the country and its Government, which if followed in regard to agriculture and manufacture, might have saved the nation much of the painful experience it has since gone through.

It ought to have been mentioned that two years previous to this (1819) Owen offered himself as candidate for the representation of the Lanark burghs in Parliament. His address to the electors contrasts curiously with such documents as are now usually addressed to voters on the eve of an election. There is not a word in it as to specific demands of any kind. He held strong views in regard to the corn laws; but at that time the manufacturers of the country were not free-traders, and therefore there was no public opinion to which he could appeal in favour of the abrogation of these laws. Five years after this an attempt was made to allow the makers of machinery to export to foreign countries, and to permit the artisans who constructed machinery to seek employment in foreign lands, but both these objects were defeated through an opposition led by the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. There was little or no political commotion beyond what had its root in the deep distress of the working classes in the manufacturing districts. The "Manchester Massacre" was occasioned by a demonstration of the working people, filled with discontent in consequence of their sufferings, and believing that if they possessed political power they could change the law so as to improve their condition. The constituencies in 1819 were

little more than a name—a few people whose right of voting was nearly always used for the great proprietors. In his address Owen explains his motives for coming forward, rather than his views on any political subject. One paragraph runs thus:—"The country is in distress; the labour of the working classes is reduced to the value of bare existence by the rapid and extensive introduction of machinery and other scientific power, by which the old proportion between production and consumption is entirely destroyed." He then refers to the study he had given to the subject with a view to preventing the threatened evil consequences. "These," he says, "are the motives which urge me to desire a seat in the House of Commons, and I should greatly prefer receiving it from the district in which I have resided the last twenty years. You know now my pretensions, and I wish not to deceive you in any respect; I have no patronage; I expect none; for, whoever may be in power, I will not ask a private favour for myself or others. If, under these circumstances, you believe my services in the House of Commons can be of public utility, I shall be gratified by your support." He was not returned, but this he seems to have counted on, in consequence of certain pledges given to another candidate before it was known he intended to stand. He had no parliamentary ambition, and though he allowed himself to be nominated for Marylebone, between twenty and thirty years after, it was for the purpose of addressing the electors, and not with any intention of going to the poll.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Visits Ireland and America.

OWEN visited Ireland in 1822 in consequence of the deplorable condition of the people, who had passed through one of their periodical famines. He carefully examined into the state of the country, and held meetings at the Rotunda in Dublin, and at certain of the large towns in the provinces. He also consulted with considerable numbers of the Irish aristocracy, as well as with the Catholic and Protestant hierarchy. He visited Maynooth, and stated his views to a meeting of the authorities and others in that establishment, and finally he reported on the condition of the country generally. Those under whose government it was had no notion of advising or doing anything practical with a view to its permanent relief.

At this time, what are now called the measures of Catholic relief were a subject of violent contention in and out of Parliament. Anything approaching to reasonable thought in connection with religious toleration did not exist in Ireland on the part of the dominant faction, and naturally the masses of the people and their leaders hated very heartily the Government and the bigoted faction by which they were oppressed. Instead of being a land of "settled government," Ireland was full of strife—religious and political. No proposal for the welfare of the people could be carried out where the co-operation of the two sections into which the people were divided was

impossible, and where mutual suspicion was so intense that whatever one party proposed or supported the other was sure to distrust and oppose. No duty was mutually understood as a common necessity, and nothing, however needed or well intended, could be suggested or entered on without leading to party contention.

But the worst part of the business was, that distress of the most shocking kind was, in the nature of things, of frequent occurrence; and before anything could be done to permanently overcome a difficulty so fatal, it was necessary to entirely change the character of the land laws. In a matter of such consequence and such pressing necessity, Owen was altogether powerless. There was at that time no public opinion in England in regard to the Irish land laws, whilst in Ireland the burning question of the day was one of religious toleration, of political power to be obtained by Catholic emancipation; and so urgent was this as an immediate necessity, that what lay behind as desirable for the political and social welfare of the country, had to be, if not overlooked, at least postponed until the religious equality of the people was secured.

Even the least informed need not now be told how utterly iniquitous the system of landlord and tenant in Ireland was. The great bulk of the people lived on and by the land. Their occupations were agricultural, and a vast majority of them had to cultivate the land without any security in their holdings. A few months' notice only was required to remove the cultivator from his home and his few acres, should the landlord will it, and to this end the whole civil and military force of Ireland was available, being in all

times and seasons at the landlords' disposal. The sad story of actual Irish evictions, and the dreadful sufferings by which they have been usually attended, is very old ; but these, bad as they were, were not the worst part of the picture of Irish misery. The people evicted died, or found their way to America or elsewhere as emigrants, and in time those who escaped with life found in their new homes more hospitable shelter than their own country afforded. The evicted were those who either failed to pay exorbitantly advanced rents, or who resisted in any way the dreadful exactions of the landlord. The masses of the tenants-at-will in the western, southern, and eastern provinces paid and remained, but were always struggling in a state of semi-starvation.

The means of the cultivator to keep life in him and his, consists of what is left between what he obtains for his crop, and what it costs him in seed, labour, manure, and rent. It can be seen, therefore, that with a power on the part of the landlord to increase rent at will, nothing can be expected but that the people shall be kept in a condition of chronic poverty. Nourishing food was not to be obtained, and, at last, the worst kind of potato became the constant diet of the people. Of this even they had not sufficient ; and when it is remembered that the potato at best can only be regarded as fit for food during about nine months out of the twelve, it needs little reflection to understand that the people who depend on it must, as a matter of pure necessity, live continually on the verge of their graves. If all seasons were good, such a state of misery as this might be indefinitely prolonged ; but with failures of crop through any of the many causes

that operate to produce them, death by hunger must inevitably follow, and hence death by hunger in Ireland was a common and almost an everyday occurrence, culminating periodically in famines.

Against this Owen could do nothing. It required a thorough amendment of the land laws to adequately meet the requirements of the case, and this was not at that time even thought of by the British public. His public meetings were well attended, offers of help were made by some of the landlords who, as patriotic men, felt that something thorough should be attempted. Money subscriptions were offered, and had the public mind at the time been in a condition to enter on such a work, something might have been attempted ; but it is not going too far to say, that the application of Owen's plans could not, under such circumstances, have been carried out, and if attempted could scarcely have resulted in anything but failure.

In the year following his Irish efforts, Owen visited the United States of America for the first time. In the year 1824 he purchased the estates of New Harmony from the Rappites, with the view of making a practical experiment of his own plans on his own land, and under such conditions as he thought most favourable to success. Pending the necessary preliminary arrangements, he visited many of the leading statesmen of the great Republic, having previously made the acquaintance of some of them in London, in special that of John Quincy Adams, at one time Ambassador from the United States Government to the Court of St James's. Those friendly to him made efforts to have his views discussed by the Congress. His son, Robert Dale Owen, then a very popular

member of that body, wished to bring the question forward, but Owen, having an offer of the same kind from John Quincy Adams, preferred to avail himself of it, knowing that much would be gained by a wise and careful handling of the matter by so experienced a statesman. "Mr Adams," he says, "advocated the subject with great ability and earnestness, but the motion was lost, as anticipated, although the minority was large and respectable. And my object was gained, for even then the population of the Union was too undeveloped, and made too selfish by their false education, for a system true in principle and too pure in practice for dollars and cents to comprehend."

This is true, but a man less zealous than Robert Owen, and more observant of the difficulties that lay in his way, would have seen this before he presented his proposals to Congress, or before he submitted them to the trial of a practical experiment. The Americans are fond of dollars and cents, and are actively and earnestly engaged in their acquisition. They live in a world where dollars, cents, pounds, and shillings are, as a rule, more highly estimated and more ardently desired than any other possession under heaven. The master-passion of the modern business man centres in these. The higher virtues of humanity are but ornaments, not absolutely necessary to life, though desirable when they can be attained without too much sacrifice. America is the country above all others where the hunters after money abound ; where the struggle for comfortable maintenance and wealth is more exciting, and promises more success, than it does in any of the old

countries of Europe. Nearly every man in America had some plan which he was pursuing, in the hope of realising what he desired; and his chances of success being as a rule reasonable, prevented him from taking up plans like those of Robert Owen, which, however just, and however full of promise, were new and not easily understood, and therefore not likely to be attractive to those who had attained worldly success or who saw before them the prospect of attaining it.

Those most apt to respond to such a call as that made by Owen, when he attempted to found his New Harmony Colony, in Indiana, were more or less likely to help in the direction of failure. There were the over-sanguine, disposed to hope for more than could be at first realised, and who would be prone to lose heart if success were less or longer delayed than they imagined it should be. Then there were the odd men of special ideas, who float about and find it difficult to fit in anywhere, through a habit they acquire of considering their merits and deservings beyond anything that may come to them as reward, especially if their rewards require hard and continuous labour. In addition to these there were the self-willed and ambitious, who abound everywhere, but who in such an experiment as that started at Indiana would have more play for their special faculty; who seek to magnify their own virtues by depreciating those of others, who cannot become satisfied with anything but what they do themselves, and whose efforts usually give little satisfaction to anybody else. The best conditions that can exist leave difficulties to be surmounted of a most serious kind, — difficulties through lack of means, through faults of character,

through want of the necessary experience. The American experiment was most certainly a mistake. Indeed, it is difficult to see how it could have brought forth satisfactory results, and its failure might be considered as a real gain to those who were anxious to see Robert Owen's opinions actively propagated throughout Great Britain. The best success that could have been accomplished by a practical experiment in Indiana, would have amounted to little more than an imperfectly understood fact, so far out of the way as to be of limited interest to those who heard of it; while the propagandism opened up in England by the agitation which Owen subsequently conducted, led to discussions by which principles were formulated, and policies set on foot, of the utmost practical importance to the nation, in connection with the educational and social condition of the masses of the British people.

CHAPTER XXX.

Visits the West Indies and South America.

WHILE in America, Robert Owen was treated by all parties with the most sincere marks of respect. He gave, by request, a course of lectures from the Speaker's chair in the room of the House of Representatives at Washington,—the Cabinet, the Senate, and the Judges of the Supreme Court of the United States being present. He afterwards lectured in several of the principal cities, and returned to Great Britain towards the end of 1825.

In 1826 he again visited America, to deliver public lectures, and also with a view to the settlement of his family in that country. In 1824 he had, as already stated, purchased an estate from the Rappites, a colony of German Communists, who were about to abandon it for the purpose of settling on another of their estates more suitable for their purposes. In 1827 he once more returned to England, and in 1828 he went back to the United States, taking with him several members of his family, for though he did not intend to permanently leave Great Britain, he had decided that America should be the future home of his children.

While in England he was solicited by M. Rocafuesti, the Mexican Minister in London, to apply to the Mexican Government (at the time a Republic) for the provinces of Cohahuila and Texas, with the view of trying one of his experiments. He did so, though it is difficult to see how such an acquisition could have been otherwise than embarrassing to him, whether he undertook its government or simply sought to establish a model colony. Several of the South American Ministers solicited him to undertake the work of colonisation in certain parts of South America. He, however, decided to apply for Cohahuila and Texas, and to this end he sent a memorial, by means of Rocafuesti, to the Government of Mexico, backed by letters of recommendation from a large number of influential persons, including one from the Duke of Wellington to Sir Richard Pakenham, British Ambassador at Mexico, soliciting his services in Owen's behalf. He also had letters from the American Embassy in London to M. Poinsett, the American Minister at Mexico.

A month after forwarding his memorial and letters, he commenced his voyage to the West Indies, Vera Cruz, and Tampico. At Jamaica he fell in with Admiral Fleming, then in command of the West India station, who introduced him to the authorities of the island, invited the officers of the fleet to meet him at dinner, and requested him to say whether he could in any way help him to forward the object he had in view. Owen informed him that he had two difficulties which troubled him. He possessed abundant letters and recommendations to the authorities in Mexico, but he had none to the ecclesiastical dignitaries,—this being a very serious oversight in regard to such a country. Admiral Fleming, however, speedily relieved his anxiety on this head. He informed him that since the last revolution there was only the Bishop of Puebla remaining, and he was at the head of all ecclesiastical affairs. The Admiral knew him very well, having conveyed him from Old Spain to Mexico. He at once offered to give Owen a letter to the Bishop, and this was no doubt better than any recommendation he could have obtained in England. His other difficulty concerned the finding of a vessel at Vera Cruz, on his return from Mexico, to convey him to New Orleans, for the purpose of fulfilling an engagement he had to meet and discuss with a minister of religion named Campbell at Cincinnati on a given date. Travelling was not then what it has since become, and this second difficulty no doubt troubled him a good deal, lest his non-appearance at the appointed time should be attributed to an unwillingness to defend his ideas. Here again the friendly services of the Admiral relieved him. "It may be," he said, "that I can send

a ten-gun brig to Vera Cruz, to wait your return and convey you from there to New Orleans." This being arranged, Owen took his departure.

The packet in which he sailed called at St Domingo with mails, and here he was also received with much warmth. In the true missionary spirit he distributed among the merchants several copies of his "New Views," and left the place much pleased with the kindness with which he had been treated. He made no delay at Vera Cruz, but on the morning after his arrival started for the city of Mexico, in a "litera" drawn by two mules, accompanied by two Mexican muleteers who were to conduct him to Xalapa.

Travellers from Vera Cruz to the city of Mexico remain some days at Xalapa, to accustom their lungs to breathe an atmosphere much lighter than that of Vera Cruz, and here Robert Owen found the Governor of Vera Cruz and several other travellers, and after four or five days he induced them to start for Mexico. Their hesitation in proceeding was caused through the Governor's known unfriendliness to the Government then existing in Mexico. To the surprise of all, on entering Perote they found themselves in the midst of General Santa Anna's army, and almost gave themselves up as lost. "We are prisoners," they exclaimed, "what shall we do?" Owen told them to put a good face on the matter, to go at once to the General, and ask for an escort on account of the danger in proceeding unprotected. The question at once arose as to who should go, and Owen agreed to go himself, if no better person could be found. As soon as he had made this offer two others agreed to accompany him. "I was introduced," says Owen, "to the General as an

Englishman going in haste to the city of Mexico on important business. He received me politely, and inquired my object. I said, 'I am going in haste to the city of Mexico to communicate with the Government, and I wish an escort to Puebla.' 'When will you want it?' 'To-morrow morning at five o'clock.' 'You shall have it.'" Seeing his frankness, Owen ventured to ask him where he would be about six weeks after that time. "I do not ask the question from idle curiosity, but I expect to be then on my return, and to have an important communication to make to you." "I shall then be at Xalapa," was the answer, "and will be glad to see you." An escort of six dragoons was ready at the time fixed, to take him safely to Puebla. What became of the Governor and his party he could not say, but supposes they retreated as rapidly as they could from Perote.

Upon arriving at Puebla, Owen presented his letter of introduction to the Bishop, and had a long and interesting conversation with him. The Government at that time was considered Liberal, a word which meant opposition to ecclesiastical domination. The Bishop had suffered severely, and was under apprehensions that he would be again attacked. His income, which had been $120,000, had been reduced to $80,000, and he was uncertain how long even that much would be left to him. He was the only bishop then remaining in Mexico, but he promised to use such power and influence as he still retained in Owen's favour, and it was arranged that they should meet again on his return from the city of Mexico. Owen considered it a curious circumstance that he should find himself in friendly communication with

one of the leading ecclesiastics of an intensely Roman Catholic country, for the purpose of introducing methods of education unfavourable to the system it was his business to uphold.

In the city of Mexico he was domiciled with an Englishman named Exeter, a person of ability and influence. On the day of his arrival he presented his letters to Mr Pakenham, the British ambassador, who told him he had instructions to do what he could to forward his object with the Government. He promised to see the President of the Republic at once, and true to his promise arranged for an interview at twelve o'clock on the following day, offering in addition to this his services as interpreter.

Mr Pakenham told the President what had been done at New Lanark, and of the strong recommendations Owen had brought with him, adding words of his own in praise of Owen. The President in reply said that his Government had, by the previous mail, received Owen's memorial, besides many letters of recommendation, couched in such terms that he and the members of the Government regretted they could not give him the government of the provinces of Cohahuila and Texas, because the governor was elected by the population of these provinces. He added, however, that the Government had reserved to itself the full jurisdiction over one hundred and fifty miles in breadth along the whole frontier between the United States and Mexico, from the Pacific to the Gulf of Mexico, about two thousand miles in length, and that his Government, after due consideration, had come to the determination to offer the government of this district to Mr Owen, for him to establish within it his rule of

peace. Owen says that this offer staggered him. He saw, however, at a glance, that there was one great obstacle, namely, that the Roman Catholic religion was the only religion permitted by law in the Republic, and nothing could be attempted in accordance with his plans where full civil and religious liberty did not exist. This statement being interpreted to the President, he replied, "We thought this would be made an objection by Mr Owen, and we are prepared to propose to the next congress to pass a law to place the religion of Mexico upon the same base of liberty as now exists in the United States of North America." When this was explained, Owen promised that when the law was passed he would accept the government of the extensive district offered to him.

At the termination of this interview he was introduced to all the Mexican authorities, and to the four foreign ministers in the city, among whom was the American ambassador, Mr Poinsett. He remained between five and six weeks, and was treated by all with "kindness, attention, and hospitality." "I knew," he says, "that at the time there was a disagreeable, distrustful, and most unpleasant feeling between the British and United States Governments, and a consequent jealousy between the officials in the countries to which they were appointed as representatives. My great desire was to terminate this feeling, and to create a good understanding. On this subject Owen addressed himself to Mr Poinsett, telling him what he thought of the existing mistrust between the two Governments. That gentleman said he was aware that the position into which they had drifted was a false one. "As you see this subject in the

same light as I have viewed it in," remarked Owen, "if you will give me letters to General Jackson and Mr Van Buren, your president and his secretary, expressive of these views, I will return home by Washington, and will see what I can effect between the two Governments." Mr Poinsett assented, and before Owen's departure placed the letters in his hands.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Mexico.

OWEN left the city of Mexico, after having made arrangements with the Government to forward a measure for the establishment of absolute religious toleration. He had received a communication from Admiral Fleming, informing him that he had sent the ten-gun brig "Fairy," Captain Blair, to Vera Cruz, to wait his convenience, and to carry him to New Orleans. On receiving this information, he set out on his return journey almost immediately. In accordance with his promise, when he had reached Puebla, he waited on the Bishop, and was received by him in a most cordial and kindly spirit. Owen explained to him a project he had conceived of bringing the heads of the English Church and the Church of Rome into friendly relations with each other. This was really an impracticable suggestion; but it shows the anxiety that existed in Owen's mind to promote brotherhood and peace.

Taking leave of the Bishop of Puebla, he continued

his journey to Xalapa, to keep the appointment he had made with General Santa Anna. Here he found him in the midst of his army, and was at once admitted to his presence. "I told him," says Owen, "I had, written in manuscript, the principles and practices recommended, in the most condensed forms I could then put them ; and if he wished, I would bring them from my hotel at any time he would appoint, and we would consider them principle by principle, and point by point, in the practice." An early hour next morning was appointed for the meeting. When Owen arrived, he found the General attended by three intelligent-looking officers, who spoke English fluently, and the discussion was at once opened.

Owen, whose mind was full of his subject, and whose pen was rapid in the expression of his thought, came prepared with twelve principles or sections of his subject, each requiring separate consideration. The discussion seems to have been carried on with much frankness, and it is said that the Republican general at its close declared himself satisfied with the correctness of Owen's views, and stated that whether he should be at the head of the army or of the government, Owen might count on his help in forwarding the project he had in hand. An invitation to dine with the General and his officers had to be declined, in consequence of Owen's eagerness to reach Vera Cruz, where the "Fairy" was waiting to convey him to New Orleans. His journey was expeditious, and, except that they had to encounter two severe north-westers, pleasant. On his arrival he started at once for Cincinnati, arriving three days before the date for which the discussion with Mr Campbell was fixed.

The debate, which continued for eight days, morning and evening, was no doubt interesting to those who took an interest in such contests. The general impression of those who heard it seems to have been that, in mere dialectical skill, Mr Campbell had a considerable advantage over Owen, but that in solidity and force of argument, in the coherence and consistency of his ideas, as well as in regard to the practical value of what he had to say, Owen was immeasurably superior. It was a fixed idea with Owen, that in all discussion the principal object should not be to attack the error put forward by an opponent, so much as to place the truth beside it, and trust to the force of truth for victory in the end. Error being multitudinous in its forms, and presenting so many points of attack, he regarded it a useless waste of time to attempt refutation by finding arguments that would expose its subterfuges and deceptions.

It was frequently alleged against Owen's doctrine of the formation of character, that it was not in accordance with the literal meaning of the account given of the fall of man, and the consequent corruption and innate sinfulness of human nature. On such occasions he never would attempt to prove that the account given of the disobedience in Paradise was false, or that it admitted of any other but the ordinary interpretation; but he would insist that at birth, and from birth to maturity, the human creature might be spoiled by neglect, or improved by wise culture; that ignorance and vice, or intelligence and virtue, might be propagated and made general by brutal neglect or judicious instruction; and, as he always carefully put it, that the idea of educational duty was not

confined to the school, but should also be made the business of life out in the world. He was satisfied to trust to such effect as time might produce on those who heard what he had to say. He was, in fact, an expositor, rather than a controversialist; and seeing that his efforts were not for immediate results, few men were so successful in drawing around him converts of a thoughtful and intelligent character. He complains that Mr Campbell, contrary to agreement, put a question to the audience for a vote as to whether they would continue to support Christianity, which, very properly, and as a matter of course, was carried. Owen, however, who had not addressed himself to such a question, and neither expected nor looked for such a vote, was in no way desirous for any decision but what the audience came to. He obtained what he informs us was the most he expected, as "throughout the whole of the long-continued disputation, he noticed that, day by day, the feelings of the audience were much with him." At such meetings much warmth of feeling is naturally to be looked for, but, to the credit of the people of Cincinnati, he says:—"I remained several days afterwards in Cincinnati to transact business, which occasioned me to pass daily from one extremity of the city to the other, and, considering the heterodox principles I had so openly advocated, it was surprising to me to experience the profound respect paid to me as I passed along the streets."

When the business that delayed Robert Owen at Cincinnati was concluded, he at once took his departure for Washington, with the view of trying what he could do to promote a better understanding than up

to that time had existed between the Governments of the United States and Great Britain. On his arrival at Washington he proceeded at once to wait on Van Buren, the then Secretary of State, who had by Mr Poinsett's letters been prepared to listen favourably to what he had to say. He tells us that he "explained fully his view of the real interests of the two nations, and day by day for about ten days we met and talked over all the subjects of difference then existing between the two Governments, and I endeavoured to point out how easily, both parties being willing, the whole might be finally settled to the benefit of both nations."

Mr Van Buren told him he had communicated his views to General Jackson, and that both were agreed as to the policy recommended. General Jackson, the President, sent an invitation for Owen to dine with him the next day, which he did, meeting Van Buren and several relatives of the President. After dinner, the rest of the company withdrew, leaving the President, Mr Van Buren, and Owen together. "Mr Owen," said the President, "your Government imagine I am opposed to them, but it is not so. I wish to be on friendly terms with them and the British nation, knowing how much the United States and Great Britain will be benefited by a well-understood cordial union; and if your Government will fairly meet us half way, we will soon adjust all differences now between us." Owen replied that he thought the British Government would frankly meet America half way, and added the assurance that the British people would be favourable to a good understanding.

This finished the diplomatic portion of their inter-

course. The President then entered familiarly into conversation with him on his home and foreign policy, often using words and phrases as nearly as possible the same as were used in his succeeding annual message. He arranged with Van Buren to give Owen letters of introduction to the United States Ministers in London and Paris, that they might consult with him, after he had seen and conferred with Lord Aberdeen, the then Foreign Secretary in England. When he returned to England, he asked and obtained an interview with Lord Aberdeen, explained fully to him what had taken place between himself and the President of the United States, informing him, at the same time, what he had ventured to promise as good-will on the part of the British Government and people. Lord Aberdeen said, "Mr Owen, I highly approve of what you recommend, and of what you have done. If the American Government will meet us half way, we will meet it in the same spirit." Owen explained that he had in his possession instructions to the United States Minister from his Government to the effect that, if he found Lord Aberdeen willing, he was to enter at once into a negotiation for the settlement of all differences. "I am quite ready," said Lord Aberdeen, "to meet Mr M'Lane on these conditions." On leaving Lord Aberdeen, he visited the American Ambassador, gave him the instructions he had brought with him from the American Government, and a good understanding was established, which seems to have lasted till the Oregon question led to new misunderstandings.

The Mexican project came to nothing. The opposition raised to complete religious toleration was

too great. Had everything Owen looked for been conceded, it is difficult to believe that any attempt at colonisation on a large scale could have been successfully made. Land in any part of America was an encumbrance rather than an advantage, and all the land that could be wanted was as much as might be required by so many emigrants as could be sent from England. To transplant a population to Mexico in such numbers as would have made even a beginning to such a scheme as was contemplated, would have required revenues not obtainable by Robert Owen or his friends, and therefore all these negotiations were connected with vague hopes, rather than with careful calculations. At this time the condition of the people was almost as bad as it could be; and so many persons of position and means had promised help, that his anxiety for, and belief in, a great effort to carry through an experiment of the kind, need not be wondered at.

"It was my intention," he says, "to have peopled this new, and, in many places, wild district, with an intelligent and moral working class from the British Islands and Europe, great numbers being anxious at this period to commence a true communistic life, which I intended gradually to introduce into this new social government of peace. Those from Europe would also have been joined by multitudes from the United States, and by many from the old Mexican states. It was my intention also to have made peace with all the Indian tribes, and to have invited them to settle at first in their own way, within the new territory, and by degrees to accustom them to the true family commonwealth arrangements, for which they were already in some measure prepared." He adds:—"My

early acquaintance with the working classes enabled me to see the downward progress they were making, in proportion as chemical discoveries and mechanical inventions increased so as to diminish the general value of their labour. I noticed the increasing power that wealth, especially in the manufacturing districts, was acquiring over them, and how, gradually, the mass of them were sinking into real slavery."

To relieve the suffering then existing, and to prevent the misery which he knew, in an unaltered state of things, must continue to afflict his countrymen, was the settled purpose of his life; and in predicting what must come to pass if the system he protested against were continued, his words were words of truth and soberness. The war of classes is as fierce as it was then. There has been no reconcilement of interests, no abatement of antagonisms; and looking at Ireland alone, the nearness to a total dissolution of society is more apparent than ever. We laugh at the failures of philanthropists and enthusiasts, and pursue our onward course, willing to believe that what is not at the worst cannot be far from the best,—tempting Providence by closing our eyes to the numerous possibilities of escape open to those who, with high hopes, combine wise and well-considered efforts.

END OF VOL. I.

THE

LIFE, TIMES, AND LABOURS

OF

ROBERT OWEN

BY

LLOYD JONES

EDITED BY WILLIAM CAIRNS JONES

WITH TWO PORTRAITS AND A FAC-SIMILE

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TO

EDWARD VANSITTART NEALE, Esq.,

IN TOKEN OF THE

ESTEEM IN WHICH HE WAS HELD BY THE AUTHOR.

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THE LIFE, TIMES, AND LABOURS
OF
ROBERT OWEN.

CHAPTER I.

Co-operative Stores.

BEFORE Robert Owen visited Mexico he had been busy in promoting active operations among his friends in England. Considering the magnitude of the work to which he devoted himself, it must have been clear to him from the beginning, that of himself he could do little beyond explaining his principles and his plans. In the nature of things, if others did not assist him liberally, it was almost certain that his efforts must end in disappointment, as no private individual, however wealthy, or however willing to part with his wealth, could reasonably hope to meet the money requirements of such an undertaking.

When Owen's appeal to the upper classes had proved ineffectual, and it was made certain that the wealthy would not supply the necessary funds, there was nothing left but to abandon his designs or to try what could be done by an appeal to the masses of the people. An appeal for financial help to the working classes is usually unsuccessful; nothing but generally and strongly felt convictions can operate effectually

to such an end, and as no agitation of any consequence had been carried on in favour of Owen's principles, it was not possible that there could exist any widely-spread conviction in favour of them, or any general enthusiasm for their adoption. The production of strong conviction in the public mind in regard to subjects to which public attention has not been constantly directed, is not to be reasonably looked for. For the instruction of the people where conviction has to be produced and a knowledge of method of action inculcated, active missionary work is necessary. A centre had to be formed from which men of strong convictions and enthusiastic temper might go forth to deliver to others the faith by which they themselves were animated. These men had to be found. Time was necessary for the discovery of the requisite qualities in men newly drawn together, and the social movement originated by Owen was as yet in its infancy. Beyond what he had himself done by means of public meetings, and printed essays and letters, little had been attempted ; and therefore, although in 1817, and for a couple of years subsequently, much discussion was carried on, it had not attracted the attention of the masses of the people, nor penetrated among them so as to impart an understanding of what was really meant, or beget the enthusiasm necessary for effective effort.

The *Economist*, the first number of which was published on January 27, 1821, price three pence, and which seems to have terminated its existence in March, 1822, was a publication of sixteen small octavo pages. Owen himself seems to have had little if anything to do with it. The editor, who signed himself "Economist," was, I believe, a gentleman named

Mudie, and it may be said that he wrote like a clever and sensible man on subjects which had connection with the social and industrial improvement of the working people. One thing noticeable was an eagerness to begin small experiments in connection with groups of families, and as this was a form of co-operation of which Owen disapproved, it was very likely the reason why he kept clear of the paper and the projects it encouraged.

The *Orbiston Register*, printed at Edinburgh, and edited by Abram Combe, the brother of George and Andrew Combe, was of octavo size, eight pages, closely printed. This, while Combe's health permitted him to attend to it, was a well-written and most useful publication; but when failing health compelled Combe to relinquish his editorial duties, it was less ably conducted. The *Co-operative Magazine* was started in 1826, and was issued in monthly numbers. It consisted of forty-eight closely-printed pages, and contained much information as to what was then going on as co-operative work: instances of the misery and crime in society, and comments thereon; also explanations of the new proposals of Owen, and expositions useful for the furthering of co-operative propagandism. The *Co-operator*, a small four-paged paper, in reality a series of tracts, contained disquisitions on co-operation as a business, rather than speculations as to a new state of society, and recorded progress with a commendable brevity. At the end of the first number there is the following announcement:—"Societies upon this principle, viz., that of accumulating a common capital, and investing it in trade, and so making 10 per cent. of it, instead of investing it in the funds at only 4,

or 4½, with the intention of ultimately purchasing land and living in community, have been established in the following places—36 Red Lion Square, London; 37 West Street, Brighton; 10 Queen's Place, Brighton; and 20 Marine Place, Worthing." The word "community" in this case signifies a group of people living together in common neighbourhood for the sake of the advantages to be derived from common arrangements for promoting education, employment, social intercourse, economy, and comfort. That there might be no mistake, as to the kind of change they proposed, it is declared that the three essentials for co-operation were labour, capital, and knowledge.

Ridicule has been thrown on the early efforts of co-operators. Their proceedings, however, are best vindicated in their own words, and the results that have followed on the spot where these words were spoken. A meeting was held in Leeds in the December of 1828, of the members of the benefit societies of that town, for the purpose of listening to a discourse on co-operation by Mr. Carson, a working man from Birmingham. The address was an excellent practical address. Mr. Carson proposed that they should form a co-operative society of sixty families, each subscribing 1s. a week to a general fund. "This sum would in one year amount to £150, with which they might commence business. The society might at the end of the year, or sooner if expedient, be enabled to go to market with money sufficient to buy the commodities they might require; because it would be one of their fundamental rules that every purchase should be made with ready money, inasmuch as their profits would be increased one-third by discount on pur-

chases. He calculated that they spent at the rate of 10s. per week each for the various necessaries of life, and this sum would amount in a year to £1,500. Profit and discount on this was calculated at 15 per cent., and this would give £234. "They might," Mr. Carson said, "procure an agent to manage their business for £1 per week, the rent of a showroom and premises would not be more than £30 a year, and, after these deductions, the society would have a clear income of £152 a year." This was Mr. Carson's calculation in Leeds, as a recommendation to the working men of that town fifty-four years ago, or sixteen years before the twenty-eight Rochdale pioneers put their £1 each together to commence practical operations in that town.[1] The *Co-operator*, page 3, No. 10, comments favourably on Mr. Carson's address. "Mr. Carson," it says, "sees clearly the enormous profits which the working classes are daily giving away to other people by not marketing for themselves. Other people grow rich upon these profits, and all the riches of the world in fact are got out of them; for they can be nothing else than the overplus of the labour of the workman above his own subsistence saved up in the shape of capital. Those who save most get most capital. The workmen, if united, might save as well as anybody else. There might as well be a company of workmen as a company of capitalists. A joint-labour company is as

[1] This account is taken from the pages of the *Co-operator*, which was presented to the writer by James Smithies, of Rochdale, and which is, most likely, the copy that guided the Rochdale men in what they did in 1844—the date of the foundation of their store.

simple as a joint-stock company. The only difference is that the one has been invented and the other not. But all things must have a beginning. There was a time when joint-stock companies did not exist. Capitalists were too ignorant to form them. As the knowledge of capitalists increased, they formed joint-stock companies; and as the knowledge of the working classes increases, they will form joint-labour companies. They will keep these enormous profits in their own hands. Mr. Carson alludes to the goodness of articles which a club or union would naturally sell in their own shop. This is another very important consideration. It is quite notorious that every article capable of being adulterated is adulterated. There are persons who live by carrying on trades expressly for the purpose. The generality of people cannot possibly distinguish genuine articles from counterfeits. Whoever buys the counterfeit for the genuine cheats himself out of so much health and strength. This is particularly the case with the workman. To him it is of the utmost consequence to have his food pure, and the most nourishment in the least compass. This he will never attain to without a shop of his own, and this shop he can never possess without co-operation."

In this way the advantages of co-operation were pointed out, and though in Leeds only sixty families were calculated on to start with fifty-four years ago, they have now above 20,400 members. The business done by the co-operators of Great Britain at the present time amounts to about twenty-five millions sterling per annum, while the profit and interest returned to the members of co-operative societies are reckoned at about two-and-a-quarter millions sterling per annum.

At the end of the number of the *Co-operator* for December, 1829, the following announcement appears :—"There are about one hundred and thirty co-operative societies now established." From this it will be seen that there was no disinclination on the part of a section of the working people to give it as fair a trial as their knowledge and means permitted.

There has been a disposition to mix up and confound the proceedings of co-operators of various kinds, and if those concerned were not unfriendly to Robert Owen, to credit him with the blundering or failure of the various experiments. He, in fact, abstained from encouraging any of the small experiments so much talked of up to 1835, in the belief that success could only be obtained by the possession of large capital; and when men with more enthusiasm than prudence urged initiatory experiments, he so strongly discouraged them that he more than once incurred the displeasure of persons who much respected him, but who thought he was aiming at more than working men needed as the commencement of a better state of things.

The great question, however, was how to acquire funds for co-operative purposes. The people who gave countenance to the social awakening produced by Robert Owen's experiments, discourses, and writings, never encouraged any idea of procuring pecuniary help, beyond what might be derived from their own industry and thrift. In the agitation carried on they made themselves responsible both as to means and ends. They excited in others only such hopes as they themselves entertained: such hopes as might be entertained after a full consideration of the

whole subject, as to its practicability by means of such power in number and in finances as the people actually possessed, or might hope to possess, by the exercise of a wise and reasonable activity. One thing is certain, namely, that any popular movement, depending for its success on the sobriety, thrift, intelligence, and forethought of the people, even though it fail in realising the precise object at which it aims, brings to those who engage in it such large gains in discipline, self-denial, and effort for improvement, that instead of incurring reproach it ought to be hailed with approval by all friends of progress.

From 1825 to 1834 co-operative action was confined almost entirely to the establishment of co-operative stores. The exact number of these cannot be accurately given. At the close of 1829, as we have seen, the number of societies was stated to be 130. It may be said, perhaps, that by the close of 1831 this number had increased to 250 at least. What is called the "bonus" or "dividend" in the present co-operative movement, was unknown at this time. There was, therefore, no personal interest of a palpable kind to hold the members together, should their faith in the ultimate results of co-operation cool. The profits were to be funded to the credit of the investors as capital for the employment of labour, and therefore the slowness of progress and the fact that the principal investors being the best situated of the members, looked more to immediate advantage, while the worst off were impatient for results, the promise of which did not approach with sufficient rapidity, caused at a given point the process of disintegration to become more rapid than that of growth; and gradually, though

the movement never completely died out, it ceased to carry in it any hope for the redemption of labour.

John Finch of Liverpool, a merchant in the iron trade, put the cause of failure, so far as it had then gone (1832), on its true ground. In that year the third annual Co-operative Congress was held in London, and at this Congress many of the stores had representatives. "The progress that has been made," said Mr. Finch, addressing a large public meeting held by the Congress, "in acting upon these principles has not been so rapid as the progress of the principles themselves. But the diffusion of knowledge is the first thing. There have been societies formed in various parts of the kingdom called trades unions or co-operative societies, the object of which is to unite their members in the attainment of knowledge, and also to obtain possession of capital. The first proposed object of these unions has been realised. Large numbers of persons, chiefly of the working classes, have been brought together in one common bond of interest and affection. But I am sorry to say that some of them have failed in the other object of their association; that is, the attainment of capital. I shall enumerate some of the causes, as I have observed them, of this failure. The first cause has been a want of union and active co-operation amongst the members. They have neglected their meetings, failed to make themselves properly and familiarly acquainted with the principles and proceedings of their society, and left the management of their concerns to a few individuals. Another cause of their failure has been the existence of a spirit of selfishness amongst them—a spirit which has been engendered

in some degree, perhaps, by those societies themselves. Shopkeeping has no tendency to improve either their principles or their morals. In the next place there has been a general neglect of business on the part of the members. They have not carefully audited their accounts, diligently looked after the purchases made for them, or superintended and regulated their stock. Another cause has been the members not dealing at their own stores. It was not to be expected that the trading societies should answer their ends if the shop were deserted by its own proprietors. Another difficulty attending these societies, and which has tended to render them sometimes abortive, is the great responsibility that attaches to the trustees, whilst there is no bond of union with the members. The trustees take upon themselves the responsibility of paying all accounts, and answering all demands upon the society. The members, on the other hand, take upon themselves no responsibility; and if the society should be found unprosperous, they walk themselves out, leaving the trustees with all the responsibility of a losing concern. The incapacity or dishonesty of storekeepers, or managers, has also been a cause of loss and failure."

This is, doubtless, a true picture; but it should be remembered that the combination laws had been repealed only eight years previously; that there was consequently no habit of association among the working people, and that the laws, giving security and freedom of action since passed through the instrumentality of the Christian Socialists, were not then in existence. The situation has, therefore, altered greatly in favour of successful operations by the people.

CHAPTER II.

Efforts to Improve the Condition of the Poor.

WHAT the store movement aimed at was, as we have seen, the accumulation of capital for the establishment of depôts, where the working people, by doing their own business, could appropriate to themselves the profit hitherto made on it by others. They were aware that such an attempt was attended by risks arising from inexperience, but they also knew that whatever they might attempt, risks and disappointments would have to be encountered. They knew, too, that their first efforts must necessarily be feeble, and progress slow; but this was an indispensable condition in connection with any experiment the people might make, where a knowledge of principle and requisite business experience were only beginning to be acquired.

The conception of this store project, whatever result it might have, was a bold one, and, considering the condition of the working classes at that time, though not encouraging, yet carried in it sufficient promise to tempt ardent reformers. In 1867 Leone Levi estimated the earnings of the working classes at £418,000,000 per annum; 10 per cent. on this would have been close on £42,000,000 a year. If we take £300,000,000 as the earnings of the working people in

1825, it will be seen that £30,000,000 a year was the stake played for. Those who commenced this movement knew very well that only a very small portion of this could be obtained by co-operative effort; but it was all there, and was every day increasing in amount, and therefore the attempt was worth making, however slight the success might at first be.

The idea included two important points, namely the accumulation of capital for self-employment, and the organisation of consumption by means of the store, with a view to controlling production, and thus removing the chief difficulty in the way of self-employment. That at first looked shadowy; but the experience acquired by perseverance made it daily easier, until gradually, and after much disappointment, changes of plan, new developments of business experience, and many vicissitudes, the new shape was assumed, and success may now be considered as assured. It was certain from the beginning that a large proportion of the earnings of the working people could not be dealt with by themselves. Their houses had to be found by the owners of property, professional services were beyond their control, while as to their enormous drink expenditure, the men of the co-operative movement from the first, refused absolutely to have anything to do with it as part of their trade. There can be no doubt that the idea embodied in the co-operative store movement, which the men in it have not yet completely realised, will, when they come to understand and apply it, work the most extraordinary revolution in the practices of trade. It might be going too far to say that Robert Owen

foresaw and understood what might be done by its full application. It is clear from his writings, however, that he saw very distinctly it would place a mighty power, capable of great results, in the hands of the working classes, and it is evident that even when its working was clumsy and unsatisfactory as a money investment, it was producing good in many ways to those who had gone into it.

It put on its members the necessity of keeping out of debt, at a time when indebtedness was the general condition of the working classes. It put upon them also the necessity of prudence and foresight, that by taking care of the wages, when earned, they might be able to conform to the ready-money payments of their new system. It led to an extensive association among its members, and to a daily intercourse in which economy and business were subjects of conversation; and, which was of still greater advantage, it gave them, by service on their committees, a knowledge of business the importance of which could not be over-estimated. It had also a most beneficial effect on the morality of trade. By their practice of ready-money dealing, they kept clear of speculative business, and risk of bankruptcy through bad debts. By the constancy of their custom, through membership, the demand became so easily calculated that their stock was, as it were, sold as soon as it was bought, and wholesale purchase could be easily fitted to retail demand. As they bought for themselves and sold to themselves, dividing the profit among themselves, there was no temptation to adulterate, to use false weights or measures, or to represent anything to be other than it was. These were moral and business

advantages which had a direct effect on the working classes. It may also be said that its tendency was to carry the people over to the side of order, as political disturbance was not likely to proceed from those who required peace and the pursuits of peace for the carrying out of their ideas.

That the men who had engaged in the store movement from 1825 to 1835 were working in the interest of the nation by promoting peace and aiding good government, may be seen by glancing at the state of the country at the time during which their labours continued. It is important to note that they were not seeking to disturb and alter a state of things that in any sense could be regarded as satisfactory. They were not recommending anything that dissipated the people's means, deepened their poverty, or excited their discontent. They were not making any class of men objects of special blame, or exciting the anger of the people against them. What they did was to recognise the miseries and the difficulties of the situation, and to put upon themselves the duty of practically remedying the evils of which they complained, and from which they suffered.

The deep distress of large numbers of the working population in the manufacturing towns, where the co-operators were most active, and where the workers ought to have been better off than in any other part of the kingdom, was simply appalling. Inquiries of a careful and minute kind had not then been carried as far as they have subsequently been, but when they were entered on, a few years later, they rendered vast service in laying bare to the public gaze a state of things that had existed for several years.

John Noble, in the appendix to his work on National Finance," has taken the following statements from "Hansard's Parliamentary Debates." "They afford," he says, "conclusive evidence of the condition of general distress and wretchedness into which the population had been plunged." Mr. Slanley, February, 4, 1840, says:—"In Liverpool in 1839, there were 7,860 cellars used as dwellings, inhabited by 39,000 people, or one-seventh of the then population of the town. In Manchester and Salford also a considerable portion of the population inhabited cellars. Out of 37,000 habitations which were examined, no less than 18,400 were ill-furnished, and 10,400 altogether without furniture. In Bury, the population of which is 20,000, the dwellings of 3,000 families were visited. In 773 of them the families slept three and four in a bed; in 209 four and five slept in a bed; in 67 five and six slept in a bed; and in 15 six and seven slept in a bed. In Newcastle-on-Tyne the residences of 26,000 poor persons were examined, and those who saw them gave a most appalling account of the misery, filth, and want of air, which prevailed." Mr. Scholfield, June 15, 1841, read from a letter to the effect that workmen, in Birmingham, with large families, "are receiving from 6s. to 11s. per week, and would be able, if they could work full time, to earn from 15s. to 30s. per week. How these families live and pay rent can only be answered by the poor creatures themselves." Mr. Baines, member for Leeds, in the same debate declared that in the town he represented there were no less than 10,000 persons out of employment, or dependent on those in that situation; the population at that time was slightly over 151,000, so that one-fifteenth

had no work. In the same debate a few nights after, Sharman Crawford, member for Rochdale, declared that in that town "there were 136 persons living on 6d. per week, 290 on 10d., 508 on 1s., 855 on 1s. 6d., and 1,500 on 1s. 10d. per week. Of these five-sixths had scarcely a blanket amongst them; 85 families had no blanket; and 46 families had only chaff beds, without any covering at all." Mr. J. Brotherton, member for Salford, said that there were in that town "2,030 houses untenanted, which, if occupied, would yield a rental of £27,000 a year. The poor-rates had doubled since 1836. In Manchester, during the last year, upwards of 10,000 families had been relieved by public subscription." Dr. Bowring said that, "at Bolton, 1,400 houses were unoccupied. Of the poor-rates, only two-thirds could be collected, in consequence of the distress." Mr. Cobden declared that, "in Stockport, twenty-nine large concerns were closed. A 2s. rate only yielded one-sixth of what it did two years ago, and a 1s. rate only two-thirds of what a 6d. rate did at that time." Much more might be added, but to register the growth of public distress in the manufacturing districts is only making known what, at the time, was admitted as a fact beyond contradiction.

In the agricultural districts, pauperism had become so general as to seriously interfere with the value of property. In a work dedicated to the members of the committee of the Poor-Law Conference, published in 1876,[1] J. R. Prettyman says, quoting from the report of the Poor-Law Commissioners: One witness, whose evidence is given in the Report for

[1] "Dispauperizature."—Longmans.

1834, says, in the parish of Cholesbury, all the land was offered to the assembled paupers, who refused it, saying they would rather continue on the old system, namely, receiving wages out of rates. The Rector, whose whole income had been absorbed by pauperism, says: "The rates, having swallowed up the rents, the parish officers threw up their books, and the poor, left without any means of maintenance, assembled, at my door, whilst I was in bed, and applied to me for advice and food. My income being under £160 a year, rendered my means of relief small, but I got a rate-in-aid of £50 from Drayton. The present state of the parish is this—the land almost wholly abandoned, the poor thrown upon the rates, and set to work on the roads and gravel-pits, and paid for this unprofitable labour at the expense of another parish." Mr. Majendie, an assistant commissioner, says: "In Lenham, Kent, some of the land was out of cultivation. A large estate has been several years in the hands of the proprietor, and a farm of 420 acres of good land and tithe free, and well situated, had just been thrown up by the tenant, the poor rate on it amounting to £300 a year." It is also reported to the commissioners that "the owner of a farm at Granden, in Cambridgeshire, could not get a tenant even at 5s. an acre, and that Downing College, which has a property of 5,000 acres, in the same county, found it impossible, notwithstanding the lowering of the rents to an extreme point, to obtain men of substance for tenants;" and at Great Shelford, in the same county, the absolute absorption of the land, it was anticipated, would take place in ten years. Cases of this sort might be quoted from a large number of

counties, extending almost throughout the kingdom, in proof of the manner in which the poverty of the country was rapidly eating away the value of property. Evidence on the subject is so overwhelming that special references need not be given.

The moral and intellectual condition of the people was on a level with their poverty. Forty-eight per cent. of the children in Birmingham were receiving some kind of scholastic training in common day and Sunday schools, while over 51 per cent. were receiving no education whatever. In Dudley, Walsall, Wednesbury, and Stourbridge, "the proportion that could read was represented as being unusually small, some who stated that they could read, when examined, were found unable to read a word, and out of forty-one witnesses under eighteen years of age examined at Darlaston, only four could write their names." The same report, page 203, says that in Sheffield, "two-thirds of the working class children and young persons are growing up in a state of ignorance, and are unable to read." So far as the welfare of the masses of the working people was concerned, the Government was not in any true sense of the word a real government. It repressed turbulence, and punished crime, in defence of property; but it neither sought to cultivate the faculties of the people, nor to satisfy by wise provision of law their legitimate wants; to give them the knowledge or opportunity which would enable them to do these things for themselves.

In such a state of things, it became the duty of every thoughtful man to exert himself for the promotion of needful reforms. The only action for such a purpose was associated action; hence the many

societies then at work, especially among those who strove for a cheap and free press, and Robert Owen and his friends, who laboured zealously for education, and voluntary endeavour on behalf of the workers of the country.

Luckily for Robert Owen, when he was most active in doing all that lay in his power for improving the condition of the working people, there did not exist one-half the books we now possess, explaining the intricacies of what is called political economy. If they had existed, however, it is probable he would not have read them, and if he had, it is impossible to believe that he would have been better fitted for the work to which he devoted himself.

He always insisted that we either had, or might have, a surplus of wealth over and above what our population could require, and the thought that most occupied his mind was not how to fit our population to our supplies, but how to distribute equitably our supplies among our population. How to get rid of the people by emigration need puzzle nobody who can find the money to carry the idle hands of Great Britain to the boundless unoccupied tracts of the United States, the Dominion of Canada, and the Australian colonies. If human creatures were simply a species of merchandise, in connection with which there was nothing to consider but the means of transport, our difficulty in connection with our population would soon disappear. This is not the case. Human passions, and affections, and prejudices, and interests, complicate the matter very seriously, and therefore Owen put before him quite a different problem, namely, how to keep the people undisturbed in the

country into which they were born, how to employ them productively, and how to distribute the produce of their industry in such a manner as to secure the necessaries and comforts of life to those whose labour had created the nation's wealth.

It was to him an astounding fact that with the power of creating wealth possessed by Great Britain, a large proportion of people should be in a state of starvation, or semi-starvation;—that in a country where so many were excessively rich, large numbers were forced to remain idle, leaving unproduced what the people were dying for, simply because there was not statesmanship enough to use the unemployed hands for the purpose of filling the empty mouths. His pressing questions at this point were—How can the idle hands be employed; how can the empty mouths be filled?

Among the many things that have been estimated, it is questionable whether the value of the time wasted, wholly or partially, by the workers of Great Britain, through want of employment, has ever yet had a money value put upon it. Some instances were given in the last chapter as to how matters stood in this respect in 1839. One-fifteenth of the population of Leeds being out of employment altogether, we may safely say that 50 per cent. in addition were only partially employed. This applied to the whole population would mean many millions sterling in wages alone; what it might mean in uncreated wealth to the nation it is, perhaps, impossible to say.

In his Labour Exchange plan, this was the question to which Owen tried to give a practical answer. That he had thought the matter out, is clear from his

"Report in the County of Lanark." In this report, which was made, at the request of a committee of gentlemen of the "Upper Ward of Lanarkshire, to a general meeting of the county, held at Lanark on the 1st of May, 1820," he insists, "*That the natural standard of value is, in principle, human labour, or the combined manual and mental powers of men called into action.*" I have referred to a small book,[1] which defines the words most in use among political economists, and I find no fewer than twenty-nine definitions of the word *value*; and I think I may say, that though the men quoted from for this purpose, are the very first as writers of reputation, it would be better, on the whole, if those who are really anxious to understand the meaning of the word, did not read the list of obscurities and contradictions given by Mr. Constable. Owen agreed with no one of the orthodox definitions of value. His idea was that gold and silver were artificial standards. These, which ought to represent the wealth of the country, lost true relation by a growth of wealth. When the circulating medium fails to meet the business requirements of the country, credit becomes a habit, inflation of credit follows, as a matter of course, and, as this rests on confidence, as soon as a panic can be got up, collapse and ruin follow, and idleness, through lack of employment, and deep suffering, through want of wages, result to the masses of the working people.

Beginning with 1817, Mr. Halbert[2] shows that out

[1] "Constable's Anatomy of Wealth."—*Simpkin, Marshall, & Co.*

[2] "Halbert's Exposition of Economic and Financial Science," page 83.

of sixty years, closing with 1877, there were thirty-two years of panic, depression, over-trading and commercial reaction. This state of things, with the awful misery attending it, cannot be explained so as to put it beyond the control of a wise statesmanship. In 1826 there was a crisis brought about by foreign loans and mining speculation. In 1837-38 there was the great American panic; in 1847 the great railway panic and Irish potato failure; in 1857 the Western Scottish Bank failure; 1866, Overend and Gurney's crushing fall, with "hundreds of limited liability companies and newly-started bank companies, bankers and speculators going down in one 'grand *mêlee*' of ruin and disaster." Subsequently to this, in one year alone, the year 1875, Mr. Purdy, in his "City Life, Its Trade and Finance," page 206, gives a list of great commercial failures, including Alexander Collie & Co., amounting to £37,058,373. There are words by which such business can be explained, but there are no words by which the awful suffering that attends it can be described. Commercial scheming and money-jobbing lie at the root of it, and in the folly and greed of men, not in the inevitable decrees of Providence, are to be found the causes for such a state of things.

These commercial dislocations, to whatever causes traced, may be regarded as hitches in our system of exchange. Either the money arrangements are at fault, or the system of supply and demand has got out of gear. In either case, the industrial machine becomes ungovernable, and breaks down. In connection with the working people, the constant fluctuations of trade are severely felt. When trade is not at

its best or at its worst, it is either improving or declining. When at its best, it can scarcely ever be said that all are employed. When at its worst, there is, among the unemployed, a general misery which no system of relief can meet, and no effort of private benevolence greatly mitigate. In the improving or declining condition, there are always large numbers wholly or partially unemployed, and suffering in a greater or lesser degree, so that, except in the rare intervals when things are at their very best, the condition of the labouring population in Great Britain is a condition of uncertainty, of competition for employment, of depressed wages, and comparative want. Out of the sixty years already alluded to in the work of Mr. Halbert, the term of decided and prosperous commercial enterprise is stated to be eighteen years, whilst that of bad trade and of decline and recovery stands at forty-two years.

Owen's Labour Exchange plan was meant to apply principally to the unemployed and partially employed. It accepted labour as the standard of value and as the source of wealth. He started in this from the ground laid down by Adam Smith, who, in his introduction to the "Wealth of Nations," says: "The annual labour of every nation is the fund which originally supplies it with all the necessaries and conveniences of life which it annually consumes, and which consists always either in the immediate produce of that labour, or in what is purchased with that produce from other nations. According, therefore, as this produce, or what is purchased with it, bears a greater or smaller proportion to the number of those

who are to consume it, the nation will be better or worse supplied with all the necessaries and conveniences for which it has occasion." M'Cullock says, p. 73 : " That the great practical problem involved in that part of the science which treats of the production of wealth, must resolve itself into a discussion of the means by which labour may be considered most efficient, or by which the greatest amount of necessary, useful and desirable products may be obtained with the least outlay of labour." In this view of the matter it must be plain that, to have inactive any portion of the community that might be engaged in productive employment, is injurious not only to those who are forced into involuntary idleness, but also to society which has to support them in idleness, instead of deriving profit from their labour. The science of the political economist, if it can only attempt an explanation instead of accomplishing a cure, must be at fault, and in such a situation, instead of being satisfied with the explanation of the political economist, it is our duty to encourage such experiments as may promise a solution of the difficulty.

CHAPTER III.

Plan of Labour Exchange.

OWEN in many ways asked the question—why, if labour be the parent of wealth, the workers of the country were compelled to starve when they were able and anxious to work? The statesmen and politicians gave no answer. The political economists spoke of a falling off in demand—of the unremunerative condition of the markets; overlooking the fact that these idle people, if put to work, would of themselves create markets by the supplying of their wants. The producer was also a consumer, and Robert Owen and his followers felt that some intelligent effort should be made to at least produce as much by the labour of the unemployed as would enable them without injury to others to keep life in themselves.

It would perhaps be too much to expect statesmen to devote their time to any subject which has not first been discussed by the public, and the condition of the unemployed never received that kind of public attention which leads to a comprehension of principles and an understanding of details. Public discussion has always taken the form of how to feed and employ paupers at the least expense to the rate-payers, when the consideration ought to have been how to employ unpauperised workers with advantage to themselves

and the public, and at no cost to the rate-payers. The worker, forced into poverty by want of employment, may be said to have no refuge but pauperism ; at first perhaps only partial, but, in the end, complete. When the pressure on the rates is not heavy, or when it is not expected to be of long continuance, out-door relief is given ; but if the pressure increases and continues, out-door relief is gradually cut off, and the doors of the workhouse thrown open in the belief that large numbers would suffer anything rather than enter them. In this way there is sometimes a temporary saving in money, but there is always a permanent increase in the inmates of the "house," and there is an increase also in that abjectness of spirit by which pauperism is accepted as a permanent condition of life.

Owen, and those who thought with him, saw what was obvious to the world at the time when the Labour Exchange was organised (1830 to 1832), that the growth of pauperism, through want of employment, was enormous, and that multitudes of people, who had up to that time struggled to provide themselves with food, lodging, clothing, and fire, by heavy, disagreeable, and continous labour, were rapidly coming to the conclusion that the lodging, clothing, and food of the pauper were better than they had been in the habit of procuring for themselves, and that they got it in what was miscalled the "workhouse," without working. In this way the labour of the country was becoming demoralised, and there was no method of dealing with it understood either by the Government or the local authorities, that could prevent the complications and dangers rapidly multiplying and becoming worse as

they increased in number. It is true that wealth was increasing in the hands of certain classes of the community, and when this wealth was boastingly spoken of, as a national aggregate, there was reason for the boast; but the wide-spread poverty, on one hand, presented such a striking contrast to the growing riches and luxury on the other, that it was a question if the position were not more calculated to excite alarm than satisfaction.

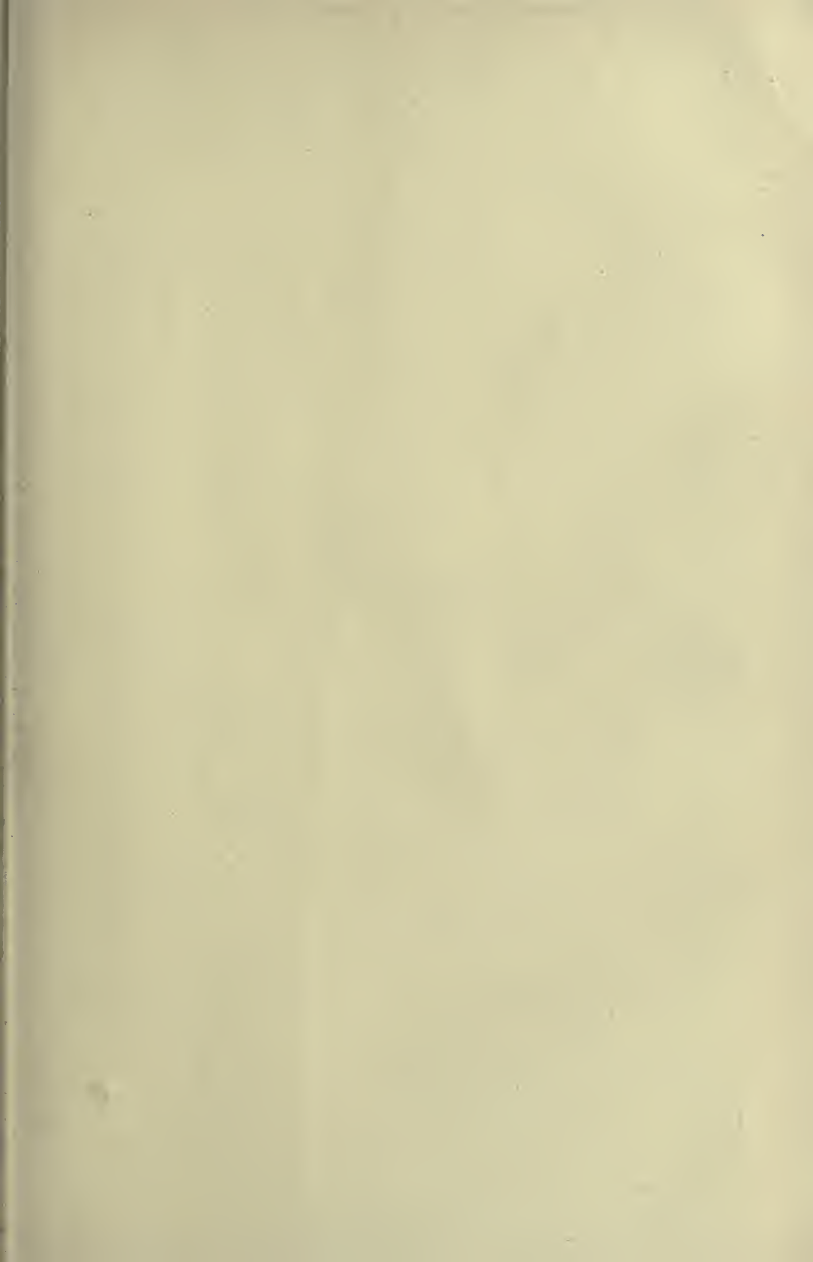
It would be difficult to conceive any plan by which the whole unemployed portion of the labouring population could be set to work under the ordinary conditions of depressed trade. There were millions of people at this period unemployed and partially employed. It would have taken so much capital, and engaged so much of the managing faculty of the country, as would have disorganised the established system. Any project where such a tendency was to be apprehended was out of the question.

The Labour Exchange project interfered with nothing that formed part of the existing system. Its proposal was to establish a centre of exchange, in which every worker who produced anything of exchangeable value might dispose of it, and receive its value in time notes. The material that had to be purchased was paid for in these notes at market value, and the time spent in its manufacture calculated at the rate of 6d. per hour. Suppose the article to be a pair of shoes, the value of the material 3s. 6d., and the time occupied in making them seven hours. In material, leather, &c., and labour, this would bring the value up to 7s., which would be paid in the currency of the exchange in fourteen sixpenny notes.

With these the maker of the shoes might purchase, in the exchange, material for the continuing of his work, and food for his family. While he was engaged in making boots or shoes, other people were employed in producing things needed by him, in depositing them as he had done, and taking home for their use the shoes he had made. There need be no limit to the operations carried on in such an establishment, nor need there be any idleness among the people connected with it, so long as there is a want that can be supplied by mutual interchange.

In such a system every unemployed hand might be brought into employment, every particle of skill utilized to supply a demand otherwise non-existent, and the absence of which implied terrible suffering. In this way labour is exchanged for labour, and so long as men can produce what they mutually require, want, in the ordinary meaning of the term, would be unknown. This is the idea that was entertained by Robert Owen and his fellow-labourers.

The carrying out of this plan was in the nature of things a difficult task and required a larger capital, and at first, no doubt, a more matured experience than was possessed by its most ardent advocates. The organisation of a primary establishment in London could not but be costly. At first, only the working classes were likely to take an interest in the movement, and capital was the thing they were least likely to possess. Large premises would have to be taken and fitted up, men acquainted with the value of the different goods brought in for exchange would have to be engaged, and money wherewith to procure a stock of various kinds of raw material would be necessary.



NATIONAL EQUITABLE LABOUR EXCHANGE

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH

TRUTH.

ESTABLISHED 1833

To the STOREKEEPER of the EXCHANGE

INDUSTRY. INTEGRITY.

No. 1467 July 22nd 1833 July 22nd 1833 No. 1467

Deliver to the Bearer Exchange Stores to the Value of ONE HOUR by Order of

ONE HOUR

Robert Owen GOVERNOR

Benj.n Woolfield DIRECTOR

Chas. West SECRETARY

CHARLOTTE STREET, RATHBONE PLACE, LONDON.

VIZETELLY, BRANSTON, & Co. FLEET STREET. LONDON

FACSIMILE OF LABOUR EXCHANGE NOTE.

There would also be needed an office at which money at a moderate discount might be given for notes when the holders could not procure what they required on the spot. Ordinary articles of food ought to be added for the convenience of members, that the notes might not be carried out of the institution to neighbouring traders who might be disposed to take them at an injurious depreciation. As a matter of course the managers would be under no compulsion to receive whatever might be brought to them. They might refuse any article in which they were already over-stocked, or any article not in general or frequent demand. Indeed, one of the chief duties of the management would be to keep constant watch over the proportions of the stock. In this system it need not be supposed that every one of the evils growing out of want of employment could be overcome. There are many employments in which those who work do not produce what could be exchanged in such a place, but all who labour in the production of articles in common use among the masses of the people would not need to spend their time in idleness.

It is no objection to say that in great manufacturing establishments the articles exchanged could be made more economically than under a system of domestic industry; because in this case they would be the produce of a skill and industry that would otherwise be utterly wasted. They would not be made for competing markets, but for their own special market, and would not be made at all if this special mode of exchanging them to the advantage of the producer and consumer were not in operation. Once such a system as this was fairly established it would be

above the accidents of financial disarrangements. Whether a panic was brought on by over-trading, or bank-breaking, or war, or any other cause, the wants of the people could be satisfied, so long as they preserved a method of exchanging what they produced.

Had the capital at the command of Robert Owen been sufficient, it is almost certain that the business ability which secured to him a uniform success in all his private undertakings would have carried him safely through his labour exchange experiment. This not being the case, he was forced to do the best he could with the means at his disposal. One writer gives a description of the Labour Exchange, in which there is not one of its features truly represented, the description has not even the exaggerated resemblance of a caricature. In principle and detail it is misconception [1] from beginning to end.

The idea of the Labour Exchange was explained in Owen's report to the County Lanark, issued on May 1st, 1820; and again in the report of the proceedings in Dublin, in 1823. It had been extensively discussed in the public press, especially in the *Crisis*.

At the Co-operative Congress held in the May of 1832, Owen submitted a report to the meeting which is thus noticed under the head of "Exchange Labour Bank:" "Mr. Owen then observed, that to render their operations effective, money, which formed the sinews of war, was requisite. He then submitted a report, containing a proposal for facilitating and securing the exchange of labour for equal labour." Indeed. the matter had been the subject of close and careful consideration for several years, and it was not

[1] Sargant's "Robert Owen and His Philosophy," p. 303.

commenced until it had been gone over in its minutest details by those who projected it, and who were anxious for its success.

Owen did nothing haphazard, or without requisite deliberation. Robert Dale Owen says: "My father found the political economists urging a reduction of taxes as a cure for existing evils; but his experience taught him to regard that as a mere temporary palliative. The very reduction of Government burdens might be taken as an all-sufficient plea for the further reduction of wages. Labour could be afforded for less. And down to the very point at which it can be afforded, which means at that point on the road to famine at which men are not starved suddenly, but die slowly of toil inadequately sustained by scanty and unwholesome food, down to that point of bare subsistence, my father saw the labourer of Britain thrust. How? Wherefore? By what legerdemain of cruelty and injustice? Thus the problem loomed upon him. We may imagine his reflections. Why, as the world advances in knowledge and power, do the prospects and the comforts of the mass of mankind darken and decline? How happens it that four or five centuries have passed over Britain, bringing peace where raged feuds and forays, affording protection to person and property, setting free the shackled press, spreading intelligence and liberality, reforming religion, and fostering civilisation; how happens it that these centuries of improvement have left the British labourer twofold more the slave of toil than they found him? Why must mechanical inventions—inevitable, even if they were mischievous, and in themselves a rich blessing as surely as they are

inevitable—stand in array against the labourer instead of toiling by his side?" "Momentous questions these!" exclaims the son, "my father pondered them day and night." They were constantly with him, and all that he said and did was the result of long thought and painful anxiety, never hurried, if for no other reason than that everything he undertook was delayed in its prosecution and robbed of its best chances of success by want of means and of preparedness among the people. Noyes[1] says that Josiah Warren communicated his views on "Labour Exchange" to Owen at New Harmony, in 1826. The reply to this is, as already stated, that Owen had published his views on "Labour Exchange" in 1820. It would be useless to attempt any refutation of the multitude of absurd things written on this project. It no doubt had its shortcomings, as most untried projects have, and it is certain that blunders were made at the beginning which were checked and corrected as experience begot knowledge. But the idea was simple, namely, to deposit manufactured goods, raw material, provisions, and so forth, receive their value in labour notes, representing time, at the rate of sixpence per hour, and then purchase with these notes anything the holder of them might require that was in stock. On the exchanges made, for the purpose of covering expense of management, a percentage was charged, so that with the exception of this charge, which was slight, everything that passed from the hands of one man to another went at the cost of production, *plus* $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., or a penny in the shilling, which was the charge made as commission.

[1] "History of American Socialism," page 95.

At the outset Robert Owen had to contend against the impatience of his followers. He held them back as long as he could, but, as in such a business enthusiasm is worth a good deal, he had to give way, and commence before the necessary preparation could be completed. The building in which the business was carried on, and which was large and convenient, belonged to a man, who, under pretence of enthusiasm in the cause of labour, pressed it on them, free of rent. When this man saw how successful the undertaking was, his enthusiasm gave way to thoughts of self-interest, which led to a demand for £1,700 a year for rent and taxes. Up to this the success of the undertaking had been very encouraging. Even in their almost unprepared state they were doing a business of about £1,000 a week, and this would have rapidly extended, had time been given before a demand so unexpected and heavy was made. In the reports which the *Crisis* gave of the progress of the business, it is stated several times that the doors had to be closed to check a pressure of custom for which they were not prepared. In fact, everything being new to those engaged in conducting the project, the large number of transactions puzzled and confused the attendants, and frequently bred discontents that were, however, rapidly giving way to a better understanding, when the landlord, who had conceived the idea of possessing himself of the premises and the business, took possession of the bazaar in Gray's Inn-road, and turned the Exchange business and those who were transacting it into the streets.

It is true that its managers should not have commenced their undertaking till they had full legal

security for continued possession of the building in which it was to be carried on ; but in such a movement there must be much real generosity, much mutual confidence among its most active friends, and it is not surprising that pretended beneficence should occasionally be used to cloak interested and sordid motives.

CHAPTER IV.

Causes of Failure.

THE Labour Exchange Bazaar was a failure, and it became so when, by improvement in its working and rapidity in its growth, it gave the fairest promise of success. So far as manufactured articles were concerned, there could be no question that it even surpassed the expectations of its projectors. Men filled up their spare time and taxed their ingenuity to produce something of exchangeable value. The notes given for the goods deposited, were used by the holders for the purchase of whatever they might require. Everything was marked at the price at which it was valued, with a separate ticket stating the amount of the 8½ per cent. charged to cover the cost of the transaction.

When the people got to understand the routine of the business, complaints ceased. The officials could have no motive for under or over-valuing the goods brought to them. There was no private interest at work, and, therefore, no private purpose could be served by any description of false or fraudulent dealing. Everything was open to depositor and purchaser. Yet every person who in any way had suffered disappointment in any transaction, had the use of the public press for the purpose of attacking the institution, and

as a matter of course this was taken advantage of, more particularly by those who did not realise, in connection with their exchanges, advantages which the institution was never meant to confer.

Nor was this all. Up and down London, in districts where the working people most resorted for the purpose of marketing, shop-keepers announced their establishments as having adopted the labour exchange system, and large numbers of people, not being aware of the fraud, had to pay for their ignorance. In this way the officials of the bazaar were called upon not only to defend their own proceedings, but to defend themselves from attacks brought on by the proceedings of dishonest traders. Such impediments, however, could only have lasted for a time. As the public became better acquainted with the nature of the establishment in Gray's Inn Road, they would have disappeared, and the institution would have had a vigorous growth.

There were, however, two drawbacks for which the enemies of the Exchange were not accountable, and which will have to be carefully guarded against if any future attempt should be made to organise such a system. The first thing required is that the labourer, or worker, should be provided with the means of producing. That is, that in addition to his skill and his time, food and raw material should be supplied to him. At Gray's Inn Road, though an attempt was made to do this, it failed, partly through lack of accommodation, principally through want of capital. An attempt was made to add green-groceries, meat, and bread, by arrangement with tradesmen who dealt in these articles, payment to be half in labour notes

and half in money; but it did not work satisfactorily. The most necessary kinds of raw material should have been kept in stock, and in order that they might be supplied to members at the lowest price, should have been purchased in large quantity in the wholesale market; but an arrangement for turning notes into current coin was established, so that purchases might be made outside the bazaar. This was so much of a deviation from the original plan that it could only be justified by such a lack of capital as would indicate a dangerous financial weakness.

Had the machinery been complete, and the capital sufficient, every working man in London, and throughout the country, might have been exempt from want of employment, except through illness, intemperance, or indolence. Nothing need have been disturbed. The labour exchange project did not carry in it a revolution of displacement; that the old order might give place to an entirely new condition of industry. It simply sought to prevent poverty, distress, and discontent; to put a stop to the misery by which the homes of the workers were invaded, whenever slackness in business rendered powerless the hands of those without whose labour bread could not be procured.

Mr. Sargant tells his readers [1] that "Owen himself felt that the scheme had not proved to be what he intended. He said that really in this its first stage—its infant and imperfect state—it was little better than a superior pawnbroking establishment, but that he hoped it was proceeding to the second stage of a retail trade, and that it would eventually become a wholesale trade; a great falling off from first expectations."

[1] "Robert Owen and His Philosophy," p 315.

This passage does not represent Owen's meaning. He was speaking of the first imperfect stage of a plan that was improving in a most hopeful manner, and he in no way expresses disappointment. On the contrary, he described the progress as highly satisfactory; not at the beginning all that could be wished, because the means to make it so were not in his possession, but moving in a right direction; the branch at Blackfriars more particularly was from the commencement in a condition to pay its own expenses.

It is difficult to account for the narrow spirit of opposition in which this most legitimate and important experiment was criticised. There could be no possible harm in enabling the working people to exchange with each other, for their mutual benefit, the products of their industry. No economic principle was attacked nor was any interest interfered with. It would have utilised time, which must have been otherwise wasted; it would have increased wealth, which has a tendency to diminish during periods of commercial depression; it would have tended to preserve habits of industry, which at such seasons suffer injury; and, so far as its influence was felt, it would in every true sense of the word have been wholesome and profitable; and yet during the whole time it was carried on, it was made the subject of ridicule and misrepresentation. It may now be difficult to believe in the existence of a determination on the part of any particular class of men to designedly oppose or suppress such an undertaking. It must be remembered, however, that at the time when the experiment was made, associations for public purposes among the working people were only beginning to make their influence felt. Trade unions

were in their infancy, but were seriously feared by the manufacturing and trading classes. The 1832 reform agitation was over, but it had called out popular vehemence as an element in political discussion, a circumstance not very generally regarded with favour. A very determined movement was even at the moment on foot for an untaxed press, with a view to popular education for political purposes. The friends of Robert Owen, such as Henry Hetherington, James Watson, and John Cleave, were the leading actors in the cheap press movement, and were warmly supported by Owen's followers. In whatever way the prejudice arose, there can be no doubt it existed, and that, in consequence, Owen had to defend himself and his proceedings against misrepresentation and attack, in a way that occupied his time, and impeded the progress of that which he was seeking to carry out.

When the parent exchange left Gray's Inn Road, it removed, after a temporary sojourn at the Surrey Institute, Blackfriars, to Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, but the inconvenience and interruption to business proved fatal when taken in connection with the inadequate capital with which so large an undertaking had to be carried on. A resolute fight was made, but whatever the object of any undertaking, the business conditions of success must be present, and in this case they were not present. The want of money stood in the way of all improvements. No important difficulty could be overcome ; no pressing want supplied ; and, in such a state of things, whatever the zeal of the projectors, the general public fear inconvenience, and decline help even in cases where they regard success as desirable.

Those who have taken the trouble to study the plan of the labour exchange can hardly entertain a doubt as to the great benefit it was capable of conferring on the community, and on the working portion of the people in particular. It may now be said that the more forward condition of the co-operative store movement is rapidly preparing the people for it; and it is not too much to add that at no very distant time it is likely to receive a new trial, which, with the help of the store organisation, could hardly fail to be a success. A prepared public opinion, and abundant money power, will be capable of accomplishing much, when the public comprehend more fully the power of association and the fitness of the co-operative idea for grappling with the industrial evils which now seem to defy cure.

In one of his addresses in 1832, Robert Owen spoke of the Labour Exchange, then being tried in Gray's Inn Road, as a kind of bridge over which the people might pass into a more secure condition of life; but it may be said:

> They tried the abyss on wings unskilled,
> That wilful generation;
> Their children sound, and mete, and build,
> On deep and piled foundation.
> With slow increase of arch to arch,
> Across the dreary region,
> A bridge to bear the onward march
> Of many a victor legion.

The great difficulty, however, in all these early experiments, was the lack of wider knowledge and higher motives on the part of the masses. The leaders were for the most part intelligent and earnest

but a multitude of the followers expected to give little, and receive much ; and it does not require any large number of such to lower the character and impede the progress of any movement. Few men could have come out of such failures as Owen did, without suspicion or stain. The hopes that inspired him were genuine, and he was always personally a loser by the experiments he tried. But when the losses incurred by him, his friends, and followers, are counted up, they are as nothing in the gross to the failure of many a single trading firm in the ordinary business of the world. Robert Owen had one object in view, but he never brought himself to the belief that there was only one way of attaining it. The co-operative stores and the labour exchange were methods of approaching it, nothing more ; and when these failed they were only failures in method ; and, hence, he and his friends again set to work, in as strong a belief as ever that the condition of society led to the existence of needless evils and unnecessary suffering, and that it was the duty of men to labour for its improvement. In this faith they entered on the socialistic campaign which in its progress attracted so much attention and caused so much alarm to people, who, if they had known more, would have feared less.

CHAPTER V.

Preparations. New Movements.

BEFORE entering on what may be regarded as the last great effort made by Robert Owen on behalf of the people, it may not be out of plaee to refer briefly to certain previous events.

The Store Movement was commenced about 1822. The Labour Exchange in 1832. In 1834 the Labour Exchange effort may be regarded as closed, but in 1835 Robert Owen was again active in the cause of the working people.

The *New Moral World* was then in the first year of its existence, and in its columns may be found a record of the activity with which the efforts originated by Owen were carried on. At page 348, vol. 1, are the minutes of a meeting, held at the Exchequer Coffee-House, Palace Yard, Westminster, on August 11, 1835, Lord Dudley Stewart in the chair. The object of the meeting was to consider the practicability of adopting measures to give permanent useful employment and instruction to all who were incapable of obtaining such employment and instruction for themselves. At this meeting, Mr Thomas Attwood, of Birmingham, was the principal speaker, and being the first to address the meeting, he expressed his belief that some part of the plans recommended by Robert Owen might be carried into execution through

the means of a joint-stock company. There was considerable discussion on this, and a committee was appointed to take into consideration the various proposals and suggestions made, and Messrs. Owen, Attwood, and James Braby were appointed as a sub-committee to report, which they did at a meeting of the general committee, held at the same place, on August 19, Thomas Wyse, M.P., in the chair. This report is a well-drawn document, and contains much in reference to the actual condition of the country at that time that is well worth reproducing.

About this time the country was reduced almost to hopelessness by its pauper system. The only cure suggested by the usual counsellors consisted in sweeping those who needed relief, and applied for it, into the workhouses, and rigidly denying relief to those who would not enter these abodes of misery. The report above referred to contains the following words: "Your sub-committee perceived at once that the subject could not be understood until the cause of the evil was ascertained; for without such knowledge, it would be impossible to provide an efficient permanent remedy. From the information which is patiently collected, it found that there was no profitable employment for a large amount of the capital which is daily accumulating in the hands of comparatively few over-grown wealthy individuals, whether landed proprietors, manufacturers, commercial men, or great capitalists, trading on public securities, domestic and foreign. It also found that under the present system of individual competition, no large additional amount of capital could be beneficially employed in the extension of agriculture, manu-

factures, or commerce ; that there was, in each of these departments, much unemployed labour wasting most injuriously for all parties ; and that the professions were over-supplied with young applicants, seeking the means of very humble support. . . . . Your sub-committee was also convinced that it will prove a waste of the most valuable powers possessed by society to attempt any longer to sustain a system, which the inventions, discoveries, and improvements of the age have rendered impracticable to maintain, except by the hourly increasing misery and degradation of the millions of the producers of wealth and consequent danger of non-producers. . . . Your sub-committee soon decided that evil only, to an incalculable extent, would arise to all parties by the mass being induced to look for relief from the possession of the wealth already created and possessed by individuals. It must be evident to those who reflect, that, if all the wealth now in existence were to be divided equally between the population of the world, without arrangements being made to produce more, that almost all this population would, for want of the necessaries of life, be in less than two years starved out of existence. This wealth has been slowly creating, through many centuries : and were it to be violently destroyed, and men ignorant of the effects of such a combination, were to attempt to govern the empire, the greatest disorder and misery would inevitably ensue."

The report goes on to state that whatever was attempted should be done in a sound knowledge of the facts, by the application of funds raised in the form of joint-stock company investments, and adds,

as a suggestion, that should emigration from this country become at any time necessary, individuals properly trained and selected from the establishments it was proposed to create, would be the best people for forming colonies abroad. No inducement seemed strong enough to draw from the wealthy classes the aid required for the improvement of the poor. The report, signed by Thomas Attwood, Robert Owen, and James Braby, was issued by the committee that appointed them, but the response was not such as to encourage further action.

The new Poor-law Act was relied on, and a great saving was made in the rates. The disease of pauperism was driven in, and the State doctors, like practical men, congratulated themselves on the improvement that had taken place. With all the wealth producing power they had obtained they could not manage to feed an industrious people who were ready to work, but they could manage to save the rates by imprisoning and starving paupers, and as the saving of the rates was the main thing to be desired, there ensued a tiding-over and a content which gave tolerably general satisfaction, where the convenience of the rate-paying portion of the public was the first and principal consideration.

The movement did not absolutely languish, though little of any consequence was done to enlist the attention of the public. In London, Owen delivered lectures at Burton Rooms, Burton-crescent, on the best means of trying a practical experiment on the land, with a view to the education and employment of the people. The real starting point, however, of the Socialist agitation was Manchester. Without the

newspaper press, in those days nothing could be effectually done in London ; small meetings held in the various districts of the metropolis might keep a belief alive, but could not spread it. In Manchester where the industrial evils complained of were acutely felt, and where the intercourse among great bodies of men was more complete, the case was different, and the words of Owen and his followers carried a meaning and significance which caused them to be taken to heart. It is true that those who entered on the new form of the agitation were, with few exceptions, working men, and entirely without influence; but they deal with matters belonging to their own lives and experience. They had not to go out of their own homes and workshops to find their facts, arguments, or illustrations, and their earnestness and zeal were stimulated by what they suffered themselves, and what they saw others suffer ; by the desire to lift the poor and ignorant into the condition of an intelligent and decent manhood. Living in a world of new industrial developments, they saw not only that old evils were perpetuated, but that there were daily coming into existence new ones that foreboded the worst consequences, not only to themselves and their class, but to society generally ; and they determined to fight against these by every legitimate means in their power.

The movement with which I am now about to deal began, as I have already stated, in Manchester. A store had been started in Oldfield-road, Salford, of which I myself was a member, but as we were for the most part young unmarried men, it was not in our power to to be good customers to our own business. We were,

as far as I can remember, utterly inexperienced, and it is, therefore, more than likely that the goods we offered for sale had little or no attraction, either on the ground of price or quality. We, nevertheless, went resolutely on, making no profit, yet not losing much on the business we did. This, if I am not mistaken, was in 1831, and when we discovered that we were not likely to make any headway, we prudently decided to wind up, and set to work in a different fashion. We had counters and shelves, and a few tables and chairs, so we took a couple of large rooms, close to St Philip's Church, and opened a school for the instruction of boys and girls, and of such adults as might think it worth their while to learn what we were able to teach. We had among us two carpenters, who were found useful in turning the shelves and counters into desks and forms, and in a short time our night school was ready for the reception of pupils.

We taught drawing, music, singing, and dancing, in addition to all the ordinary branches of tuition, my own position being that of writing master. We drew up a small handbill, which was distributed among the houses of the working people in the neighbourhood, and when this was done, we made a house-to-house visitation, begged the people to send their children, and if possible, to come themselves. The result of this was that in six months after we opened the school we had no fewer than 170 scholars of both sexes, who were steady and regular in their attendance, and whose ages ranged from about twelve to forty. No charge was made, nor did any of the teachers receive any remuneration. The majority of the pupils were factory girls and boys, but I can

recollect mechanics of mature years learning to write, with a desperate determination to be successful, though the difficulty was great.

We carried this school on for six years, during which time we also held Sunday meetings at which essays were read and lectures delivered, having reference chiefly to the condition of society, the changes that were taking place, the further changes that in the interest of labour were desirable, and the duties of the working portion of the population in connection with these.

The first two or three years of our co-operative effort were the busiest years in promoting and carrying the Reform Bill of 1832. I need scarcely say, that, as young men taking an interest in advanced thought, we were zealous political reformers, Manchester and Salford having then no parliamentary representation. This was also the time at which the struggle for an untaxed newspaper press began. Many of us were active in this agitation, and in promoting sound legislation. Those who were disposed to work found plenty to do, and for those who joined in the cry for education, factory legislation, social reform, and freedom of thought in matters of religious faith, there was little else than calumny and abuse; and it must be confessed that many of those most active in this regard themselves, were working people, though it is fair to state that they were among the most ignorant of their class.

Though the improvement which has taken place since then is not all that it might have been, it is so great that most men of the present day would find it difficult to realise the brute indifference, and the blind

hostility, with which the social and industrial reformers of the earlier part of the present century had to contend. A very considerable advance had been made on the condition of things in which Church and King mobs had their origin. The working people generally were acquiring knowledge, and were fast becoming independent and liberal thinkers, but there was a frightful residuum of gross ignorance and of the multiform brutality by which ignorance among the masses of the people is always attended. Multitudes were willing to sell their votes—where they possessed them, as freemen, in the old Parliamentary boroughs—and where they had no votes their violent opposition to liberal men was obtainable by drunkenness, and by the excitement of party passion.

In regard to the employment of their children in factories, the conduct of many of the working people was as bad as it could be. Habit in this matter had utterly brutalised large numbers, and improvidence and poverty tended to confirm evil habits. The masses of the factory workers were ignorant and poor, and they were assured by those interested in keeping them so, that any reduction in the hours of labour, or any change in the treatment of children that added to the cost of production, would inevitably lower wages, and, as this meant a deepening of their poverty, they looked upon the advocates of short time in the factories as their enemies. To this it was added that what we were recommending would drive the trade out of the country into the hands of foreigners, and, clumsy as this device was, and untrue as it has proved, the ignorant and brutalised portion of the population had come to believe that if they did not continue to sell

their children, body and soul, at the lowest figure, they themselves would suffer loss, and the trade of the country be ruined. Such persons did not, as a matter of course, patronise the cheap, unstamped press. Knowledge was, above all other things, what they did not desire, but, as the battle went on, these gradually, and especially the young, rising generation, came over to the side of justice and reason, and the old political and industrial masters had to give way before a reasoning they could not answer, and a force they were unable to resist.

A specimen of the manner in which what was called the Socialism of the day was combated was published at that time, as having been sung at St. Phillip's Sunday School, Salford, on Whit-Monday, May 23, 1831. St. Phillip's Church, when we first began our co-operative labours in Salford, had, as it were, a special duty to perform in counteracting the new and dangerous doctrines which we had the audacity to propagate within a stone-throw of the parsonage. My readers will understand how suitable the following song must have been to the kind of people I have just described :—

> Here's a health now to honest John Bull,
>   When he's gone we shan't find such another ;
> Here's a health to old honest John Bull,
>   Here's a health to old England his mother.
> She gave him a good education,
>   Bid him stick to his Church and his King,
> To be loyal and true to the nation,
>   And then to be merry and sing,
>   Fol de rol, &c.
>
> For John is a good hearty fellow,
>   Industrious, honest, and brave,

Nor envies his betters, brave fellow,
 For betters he knows he must have.
There must be fine lords and fine ladies,
 There must be some little, some great,
Their wealth the support of our trade is,
 Our trade's the support of their state.
  Fol de rol, &c.

The plough and the loom would stand still,
 If we were made gentlemen all,
All spinners, or weavers ! who'd fill
 The senate, or pulpit, or hall ;
"Rights of man" makes a very fine sound,
 Equal riches a plausible tale ;
But whose labour would then till the ground ?
 All would drink, but who'd brew the ale ?
  Fol de rol, &c.

Thus naked and starv'd in the streets,
 In despair we should wander about,
Should liberty find us with meat,
 Or equality lengthen our coat.
That knaves are for lev'ling no wonder,
 You may easily guess at their views ;
But who would get most of the plunder ?
 Why, those who have nothing to lose !
  Fol de rol, &c.

Then away with such nonsense and stuff,
 Full of treason, confusion, and blood,
Every Briton has freedom enough
 To be happy as long as he's good.
To be ruled by a merciful king,
 To be govern'd by juries and laws,
And then to be merry and sing
 This, this is true liberty's cause.
  Fol de rol, &c.

This is a sample of the way in which we were attacked in verse, and, as might be expected, the

attacks in prose were not less lively and well-intended. Many specimens of the advice given to working men, and the kind of reasoning used, might be given. The following is taken from a pamphlet entitled "Ten Minutes' Advice to Labourers," published by Hatchard and Son. After cautioning the poor against gambling, gin-drinking, and drunkenness generally, the writer tells them that they should be industrious, economical, saving, contented with their station, careful how they marry; that they should not grumble about taxes, nor be noisy about reform. Then the following satisfactory explanation of the world's deepest puzzles is given:—"It should also be remembered that, except a rich man locks up his money—a very rare case, indeed—he pays away his income to servants, labourers, and tradespeople, who again lay out the money in food and clothes for their families; so that, in fact, a division is at present made of his property among the poor, though not, indeed, an equal one. But all forced attempts at equalising property have ever failed in producing the end designed, and must ever fail, for it is as much a law of nature that some should be rich, and some should be poor, as that some should be tall, and some should be short." The writer then goes on to say, "It is the will of God that everything in this world should be liable to change—the sun does not always shine; a rainy day must come. Sickness will succeed to health, want to plenty. Those changes have happened in all times and countries, and no doubt will continue to take place as long as the world lasts. Many, however, are too apt to spend all they get in drinking and intemperance, perfectly indifferent as to the future, the con-

sequence of which is, when work is scarce and wages low, they are reduced to great want and distress; then they are ready to find fault with the times, the laws, the governments, &c."

We were always ready with our replies to this sort of criticism. We knew that the people who resorted to such shifts were not themselves deceived by them, and that in speaking of the poverty and sufferings of the people as Providential arrangements they were hypocritically disgracing religion, and destroying its influence for good among the people. We felt this very strongly, and did not hesitate to say so, though, for doing this, we incurred much blame from such as believe that the true policy in relation to the evils of society is to hoodwink the people and leave to time the cure of all the wrongs by which men are afflicted. I need not say that the ideas such opponents ascribed to Robert Owen and his friends were not those held by them. It was order, not anarchy, they sought for; and it was justice, not an impossible and absurd equality, they laboured to establish.

The Congress of 1836 was held in London, but nothing of a practical character was attempted. Delegates were sent from Manchester, who brought back favourable reports as to what had been talked about and done, with which we were not quite satisfied. We had among us in Manchester more life and energy, united to an active system of teaching. We possessed a number of men who had proved their fitness to teach, and we were, therefore, determined to throw ourselves into the movement and try whether or not we could secure a substantial following, with a view to further effort on behalf of the working people.

CHAPTER VI.

Agitation in Manchester.

BETWEEN the London Congress of 1836 and the Congress held in Salford in 1837, there was a great activity in Manchester. Robert Owen visited the town and delivered lectures at several places in the district. Not only were there crowded audiences in the New Hall, in Salford, but a three years' engagement had been made to occupy every Sunday a large new hall in Peter Street, Manchester, and this, which held about three thousand people, was always full.

Nothing of the kind had ever been tried before in the mannfacturing districts. There were doctrines, practical projects, and a continuous teaching by men appointed for the purpose by a solidly-organised association. A good band of music was formed, singers were drilled, a hymn book published, a form of service arranged, and everything connected with the Sunday meetings was orderly and decent. First, a hymn was sung, then a lesson read, a hymn again sung, an address delivered, discussion invited, applause or disapprobation being strictly prohibited, and when the time allotted to this had expired, another hymn was sung, and the proceedings were brought to a close.

The people attracted to these meetings, as well as

those who constituted the membership of the association, were, as a rule, the most respectable portion of the working classes, with a fair sprinkling of the most thoughtful and independent of the shopkeeping and middle class. Those who wished to join were entered as members, and became active in forwarding the work in hand. Nothing as immediate advantage was held out to those who joined the society. On the contrary, they were called on to pay regular weekly subscriptions, and to assist in many ways that involved trouble and expense. People from the surrounding districts flocked into Manchester and Salford on Sundays, and during the week-days held, in their own neighbourhoods, meetings which were usually addressed by deputations from Manchester. After a little time good rooms were opened in every town and village of any size, lectures and discussions were commenced, and brought into the field active young men, who, in this way, had opportunities of forming and uttering opinions in connection with this new awakening of the people.

It was not a sudden outburst of enthusiasm calling for nothing but the excitement of the moment to give it strength. The first thing it protested against was the ignorance of the people, and the vices that sprang from and flourished in this ignorance. Drunkenness, swearing, dog-fighting, man-fighting, and violence of whatever kind were attacked. The factory owners were condemned for taking no care for the educational and moral welfare of the people. The clergy of the Established Church, and the ministers of the various sectarian chapels were attacked for living without protest in the midst of a state of ignorance

and depravity, which it was their special duty to war against, but which was more than half tolerated by their mild, conventional, weekly censures. Perhaps, in the whole time, between 1816 and 1845, when the proposals and plans of Robert Owen were, in one form or other, constantly under discussion, there was no busier year than 1836.

Owen, himself, made an extensive lecturing tour, taking in all the manufacturing districts, from London to the West of Scotland. Writing from Manchester, on February 16th, 1837, he says :—" On Saturday morning I left Birmingham and found myself comfortably in my old quarters with my friend, Mr. E—, at Stony Knolls, about a mile from Manchester, at nine o'clock in the evening. The next morning our friends from Salford came to me to say that I was expected to deliver a lecture in their new large room, Peter Street, in the evening. I went there accordingly, and to my surprise, I found an audience of certainly not less than two thousand persons. It is a fine, spacious, magnificent room for the purpose. It is, as I am informed, the largest public room in Manchester."

The *True Sun*, one of the London daily papers, gave the following notice of the lecture :—

" On Sunday evening last, Robert Owen delivered a lecture in Bywater's Room, Manchester, to an audience of two thousand persons, upon his peculiar doctrines. He was listened to with considerable attention, and concluded by courting discussion, upon which Mr. Hewett, a gentleman of some literary attainments, rose and catechised Mr. Owen in a very clever and lucid manner, and, we think, evinced a

very sound knowledge of his subject. However, the venerable lecturer never lost that amiable equilibrium of temper which is such a distinguishing trait of his character."

I insert this paragraph, as, in connection with the agitation of Owen, it should be remembered how free his language and manner were from anger or hostility; how anxious he was to impress on friends and opponents the necessity of dealing calmly, though resolutely, with the evils against which he protested. And it is right to add that his friends, as far as they could, followed his example by accepting the most adverse criticism even gross misrepresentation, and occasionally violent abuse, without angry retaliation, or any protest, beyond what was necessary to check uncalled-for insult, or to vindicate their principles and proceedings.

The spirit that had for some time been growing in Manchester and its neighbourhood, was now taken advantage of. A double course of lectures during the week were delivered by Robert Owen, besides which the Sunday lectures were more than usually crowded. The press took the matter up, and while the papers of the old Tory type denounced the "socialists" as in every way wicked, and as deserving to be hounded from society, the liberal papers, the *Morning Advertiser* particularly, were eloquent in praise of Owen and his followers. He was at this time sixty-six years old, but full of vigour and energy.

Before Owen commenced his double course of lectures, he issued an address on the necessity of united action for the promotion of public good. "You live," he said, "in the midst of a society altogether different

from that in which your ancestors lived in this district one hundred years ago. At that period there was not the improved steam engine of Watt, nor Arkwright's improved spinning machinery ; the power-loom, mail coaches, steamboats, gas lights, steam carriages ; and a thousand minor inventions now familiar to you, were then unknown. There were no cotton, woollen, flax, or silk mills ; there were no children employed in mills of machinery ; there were no women taken from their domestic duties and from their homes to public works. There were no feelings of hatred between masters and servants ; there were no poor wretches over-exhausted with labour in unhealthy atmospheres, doomed in bad times of periodical and frequent occurrence to live miserably, or to die by slow starvation, while surrounded by wasteful and extravagant luxury ; there were light poor rates, and all ashamed to apply for them ; there were many holiday periods in the year, much health, and a considerable degree of rustic enjoyment for the working classes, who were then chiefly employed in agriculture, living in the family with their employers, and working daily with them, or living and working in a similar manner." . . . "This change," he goes on to say, " has produced many advantages, but it has also produced many disadvantages. . . . The change from the agricultural system to the manufacturing, commercial, and money-dealing system is one of the necessary steps in the progress of what is called civilisation."

In a subsequent paragraph he points to the growth of combined action among all classes of the population for common purposes, and hails this as one of the

most promising signs of the time. "Thousands of highly advantageous results may be obtained by well-concerted union, not one of which would be obtained by isolated effort. But society is yet acquainted only with the puny operations of the individual system. The human mind will be astonished when it shall be enabled to compare what is accomplished by conflicting individual efforts, with those which may be immediately obtained by a well-devised rational system of union." Alluding to his proposed lectures, he goes on to say: "I propose to show the existing strong necessity for the change, and the benefit of it to every class, sect, party, country, and colour, as well as the easy means by which it may be commenced, and finally accomplished, without the slightest injury to the person, property, or conscience, of a single individual. In Manchester, the seat of my early aspirations after knowledge, I intend giving a full double course of lectures; in the mornings at eleven o'clock, for that class of the population who have most leisure; and the other at eight o'clock in the evening, for those who are too much engaged in the morning to attend. The proceeds of the lectures will be equally divided between the Athenæum and the Mechanics' Institution, Manchester." The morning lectures were but thinly attended, but the evening lectures were crowded, and excited the liveliest interest among the thinking portion of the working people.

It has been complained of Owen, that he spoke as one with authority, rather than as an inquirer; but those who made this charge should have remembered that he had been for at least thirty-six years practically experimenting on the two leading points he was most

anxious to enforce ;—His theory as to the formation of character by education, wisely administered, he had demonstrated at a heavy expenditure of money and time, and by his experience he had convinced himself that if the people would save themselves from the growing evils of the new system of manufacture, then becoming everywhere established, they must possess themselves of the implements of production. The knowledge he had acquired during his early life, coupled with his special experience in connection with the effort to establish Co-operative Stores and with the Labour Exchange, had carried him beyond the position of a mere inquirer. He was neither dogmatic nor impatient. His manner was never offensive; on the contrary, inquiries and disputes which were forced on him in a cavilling and contentious spirit, when not met by silence, were treated with a respect and attention, neither they nor their authors merited.

During this visit, a discussion took place between Owen and a clever young dissenting minister named Roebuck. As might have been expected, the disputants ran side by side, scarcely touching each other on any one of the points in dispute. Owen based all he had to say on the influence of education on character, and on the necessity of so reforming society as to secure justice in all conditions of life. These points he enforced with eloquence and earnestness, producing a very powerful effect on his audience.

On the other hand, his opponent, who was also both eloquent and earnest, urged nearly everything that could be said in favour of freedom of will in the choice of doctrine, and the responsibility of man for the correctness or error of his opinions and the truth of

his religious creed. Of the wide range of subjects connected with the employment and condition of the people he knew nothing, and therefore could say little, beyond making a general defence of the existing condition of things.

The activity of Owen, during this part of the year of 1837, was the opening of a movement in favour of a social and industrial reform in England which since that time has borne noble fruit, and which is yet filled with noble promise.

When the annual Congress met at Salford, in the May of 1837, an active and vigorous agitation was in operation in the manufacturing districts. It was carried on, however, by purely local effort, and by the zeal of a few men who held themselves in readiness to answer any call that might be made on them.

When anyone was needed at any point within reasonable distance, to lecture, or to discuss, Manchester was applied to, and some person was sent. As a matter of course, as the principles spread the duties in this way became heavier, and when the work in the school is considered in addition to lecturing and discussing, sometimes at a distance of forty or fifty miles, it can easily be seen that no man who had to earn his own living could carry on such a work continuously.

The Congress had to take this into consideration—to find the means whereby the stress should be taken off those who had worked unremittingly up to that time. It had also to define the constitution and aims of the society, so that the character of the work to be undertaken and the objects to be achieved should be clearly understood by all. The purpose of the

agitation could be clearly stated; what could be realised would of course depend to a great extent on the amount of public support the agitation might receive. There was repeated at the Salford Congress the following declaration which had been made two years before: "The object of this association is to effect peaceably, and by reason alone, an entire change in the character and condition of mankind, by establishing over the world, in principle and practice, the religion of charity for the convictions, feelings, and conduct of all individuals, combined with a well-devised, equitable, and natural system of united property; which united property is to be created by the members of the association, without infringing upon the rights of any private property now in existence. This great change to be introduced and accomplished by devising and adopting new arrangements for forming a superior character for the human race; for producing and distributing in the best manner the best qualities of all kinds of wealth abundantly for all; and for governing mankind without artificial rewards or punishments."

This was certainly an ambitious undertaking. It may occur to some that the terms in which it is expressed might have been more moderate and more discreetly chosen; but an effort of the kind was needed, and though the result might fall short of the somewhat extravagant hopes many might entertain, it was better than that nothing should be attempted.

The method suggested by the Congress was to establish a central association with branches extending to every part of the world, and by means of this central association and its branches to create a new

public opinion in favour of an entire change in the character and condition of society, by the aid of public meetings, lectures, discussions, missionaries, cheap publications, and so forth; by founding communities in which to educate and employ all the members of the association, under arrangements favourable to their health, intelligence, and happiness. Then follows the statement that the association discarded the fundamental errors by which the past and present deplorable condition of the human race had been produced. These fundamental errors are stated to be "that man is bad by nature, and that he can believe or disbelieve, feel or not feel, as he pleases; that he forms his own character, and that, consequently, he ought to be rewarded or punished for it, both in this world and the world to come."

It would not be correct to suppose that the Socialists at this time entertained the common idea of popular education, or that their notions as to the better treatment of the people simply meant a change whereby more leisure and a greater abundance of food and other necessaries might be obtained by those who worked. They went much further. On the question of education, Owen took much trouble to explain himself, and, although the most active of those who opposed him on religious grounds, mistook and sometimes misrepresented him, his followers were sound believers in his principles, and regarded the education of the people as the first duty of society.

It was Robert Owen's dream that society might be brought to entertain and act on the belief that the moral faculties of man had never had the development they were capable of receiving, and while he

regarded the acquisition of wealth, and its just distribution, as necessary to the happiness of men, his leading thought was concerned with the attainment of the higher moral life in which all things are subordinate to a sense of duty begot of the recognition of a universal brotherhood. He believed in the gains that would result from earnest effort in the work of education, even in the limited sense in which the term was usually understood; but he, nevertheless, considered all that could be accomplished on the ordinary plans as trivial and disappointing compared with what might be done.

When the Socialists arranged their plans for the establishment of village communities, their first thought was directed to the land to be purchased, or held on long lease; their next to the organisation of labour on the land, especially of skilled labour in the ordinary trades of the country, with the view of making the worker the director of, and the chief gainer by, his own industry; of conferring on all the best education that could be obtained.

Society was then afflicted, as it is now, by the competition of individual interests. The multitudes were suffering whilst the few were being enriched, and all idea of a common interest was disappearing rapidly before the growth of personal selfishness.

The advocates of Socialism were not violent men. They had pleged themselves by their public declarations against violence of every kind. They had made known, as widely as they could, and with the strongest emphasis, their firm conviction that the wrongs they condemned could not be rectified by disturbance of the peace. Their constant contention was that reform,

political or social, must be thoughtful, deliberate, and peaceful ; that violence is the offspring of impatience and ignorance, except where free thought, free speech, and the right of association are prohibited ; in which case physical force as the natural defence of freedom is a necessity that justifies itself.

CHAPTER VII.

Manchester Congress. Extended Work.

THE Congress of 1837 was well attended. There were delegates from many of the important towns in Yorkshire and Lancashire, who reported encouragingly as to the growth of opinion in favour of co-operation, among the people in their various localities, and the letters received and read from towns that had not sent delegates were also encouraging.

It was strongly recommended that a system of teaching should be organised, and missionaries and tracts employed, to make the general public more thoroughly acquainted with the principles of Owen. A resolution was passed in favour of sending out missionaries, and two were appointed; but as much had to be done in the way of mere organisation, nothing further was accomplished in reference to this. It was also agreed to enrol the society under the 4th and 5th of William IV. The form of government was likewise the subject of much discussion, and as it created more division than any of the questions submitted to the Congress, I may describe the point on which the dispute arose.

The ordinary and popular method of governing societies was by the election of committees by general vote. At this period the habit of association was

new, and, in the management of popular bodies, led to delay, blundering, and endless talk. In the new movement it was determined, if possible, to check this, and the mode most in favour was to elect at the head one man, and in each branch one man, having the full confidence of those who elected him. To these was to be left the conducting of the society, with the aid of a council elected by the members of the society, or the branch to which they belonged. The chairman, or head man, was to be elected for two or three years, or, as the resolution expressed it, until a sufficient number of the members acquired the knowledge and experience necessary for conducting the affairs of the society. It was never questioned that the popular method of management was the best, but where those engaged in the work undertaken were deficient in experience, it was thought a fit exercise of the power possessed by the society to place it in the hands that could best use it. This has been construed into a despotic tendency on the part of Robert Owen and his disciples, but it really grew out of a desire to adopt the best method of carrying out that which they wished to accomplish. Practically, by monthly meetings and annual congresses, the members had ample power.

During the Congress, a great meeting of the working men of the West Riding of Yorkshire, was held on Hartshead Moor, near Huddersfield, for the purpose of protesting against the New Poor-Law Bill. The numbers attending this meeting are stated at 200,000, —an immense gathering, when it is considered that most of those present must have travelled miles from the surrounding towns. At this meeting a deputation,

of which Robert Owen was one, attended from the Congress. In accordance with the habit of the newspaper press, the speeches were but briefly reported in the London papers, and that of Owen was wholly omitted. A report of it was, however, given in the *Manchester Advertiser.* He said he "attended there that day not merely to say that he was opposed to every part of the New Poor-Law Bill, but also to say that he was opposed to every poor-law whatever. There ought not now to be a poor-law in this country —there ought not to be a necessity for one. There might have been a time, years ago, when a poor-law was necessary." After denying that the labouring classes required the interference of the idle and inexperienced rich to assist them in bettering their condition, seeing that they had such ample means to that end within themselves, he alluded to the following circumstance: "I have," he said, "interested myself from an early period in the condition of the labouring classes. When Mr. Sturges Bourne's committee was sitting I presented a report to it, which was admitted to be true in every part, and had it been acted upon, more than one hundred millions sterling would have been saved to the country ere now, and not one child need have been left uneducated. I communicated the plan contained in this report to the Dutch Ambassador, Mr. Falck, who saw its importance, and sent it to his Government, and the present poor colonies of Holland are founded upon it. Land was provided, and paupers were established thereon to cultivate it." He also referred to his education scheme, which had been communicated by him to the King of Prussia, and which, he believed, had in some degree

helped to found the first system of national education established in Europe.

The principal speakers at this meeting were Richard Oastler, Joseph Rayner Stephens, Robert Owen, William Stocks, jun., James B. Bernard, Geo. Fleming, and Alexander Campbell. These gentlemen met at Fixby Hall, the residence of Richard Oastler, and published, as the result of their meeting, the following minute, dated May 17, 1837:

"The present extensive and rapidly-increasing distress which is everywhere overwhelming the most numerous and most industrious portion of our home population, loudly demands the immediate, strenuous, and united efforts of the true patriots of all parties, inasmuch as, unless some plan for instant as well as ultimate relief be proposed, the interests of all classes must be sacrificed, the safety of all the inhabitants of the State endangered, and the whole country hurried headlong into anarchy and revolution. It is, therefore, resolved, 'That in the opinion of the undersigned friends, now present, of the unemployed producers of wealth, the first and most pressing duty of the people is to demand immediately from the Government of the country such an advance of capital as would be sufficient to set those who are now starving to work, so as to enable them permanently to support themselves, by a due mixture of agricultural and manufacturing operations in their native land, the surplus of which newly-created wealth, after fully providing for the wants of the producers themselves, to be applied to the payment of interest, and the gradual repayment of the principal originally advanced, after which the whole wealth and property thus created to be the en-

tire, sole, and undivided possession of its proper owners, after furnishing their fair proportion to the maintenance of the national government.' "

In connection with this document the state of the country at the period must be borne in mind. A rapid change for the worse in the condition of the people was going on. The charge for the support of the poor up to 1776 had not been more than one million and a half. Sixteen years previously (1750) it was only £690,000. It is true there was a considerable increase of the rates during the latter years of the century. The American War and the French Revolution had caused prices to advance without any advance in wages, and coupled with this the enclosure of the common lands had deprived the rural population of certain privileges, and deepened their poverty so as to cause a considerable increase of pressure on the rates. Manufactures had commenced to grow rapidly, and the agricultural labourers flocked into the towns; but this did not raise the price of field labour, through a number of causes which need not be stated here, as it is the fact only we have to deal with.

In the towns, which became rapidly overcrowded, things were no better. The power of production, in consequence of the substitution of mechanical for manual labour, reduced wages in such old handicrafts as had been interfered with; and the difficulty of finding markets for the large quantities of goods produced by mechanical power led to a want of employment among the working people of Great Britain such as all men regarded as undesirable and dangerous. In 1834 the poor rates amounted to the enormous

sum of £7,511,219. We have nothing to do with the number of ingenious explanations given to account for this. The £690,000 of 1750 had grown to be above seven and a half millions, while the trade of the country had been rapidly increasing, and most naturally there was great suffering and deep discontent among the people. The landlords were neither respected nor trusted, as their conduct over the whole time had been unpatriotic and selfish. By the alchemy of statecraft, while manufacturers and landlords grew rich the people became poor—a spirit of successful self-interest was the basis of loyalty on the one side, while, on the other, a wide-spreading misery made the people hate the kind of government their task-masters were profiting by. Byron's description of the landlords in the "Age of Bronze" can scarcely be regarded as over-coloured :

" See these inglorious Cincinnati swarm,
Farmers of war, dictators of the farm ;
Their ploughshare was the sword in hireling hands,
Their fields manured by gore of other lands ;
Safe in their barns, these Sabine tillers sent
Their brethren out to battle—why ? For rent ;
Year after year they voted cent. per cent. ;
Blood, sweat, and tear-wrung millions—why ? For rent.
They roar'd, they dined, they drank, they swore they meant
To die for England—why then live?—For rent.
The Peace has made one general malcontent
Of these high-market patriots. War was rent !
And will they not repay the treasures lent ?
No ; down with everything, and up with rent ;
Their good, ill, health, wealth, joy, or discontent,
Being, end, aim, religion—rent, rent, rent ! "

The people who had to eat the tax-branded loaf

knew how just this denunciation was. In another way the same was true of the new manufacturing aristocracy. They had not got hold of the land, but they had got possession of the new implements of industry, and these they were applying without reference to anything but the profit to be derived from them. The state of things that grew out of this in connection with men, women, and children has been vividly painted, not only in the songs of poets, but in the plainest prose of parliamentary inquiry. Ebenezer Elliot's "Preston Mills" is a sad picture of factory child-life, but it is no exaggeration, and its two concluding lines:

> "O, who would be or have a child?
> A mother who would be?"

contain queries that must have perpetually haunted the minds of all who could understand or feel. The lines of Miss Barrett, too, were but an echo of the sorrows of the people, and the sufferings of the young:

> "Do ye hear the children weeping, O, my brothers!
> Ere the sorrow comes with years,
> They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
> And *that* cannot stop their tears.
> The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
> The young birds are chirping in the nest,
> The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
> The young flowers are blowing toward the west;—
> But the young, young children! O, my brothers,
> They are weeping bitterly!
> They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
> In the country of the free."

The air was loaded with the horrid factory grievances and with the wails of poverty, proceeding from workers whose lives had become almost unbearable by the uncertainty of employment, the insufficiency of wages, and the hopelessness of the struggle in which they were engaged. The evils protested against were not shams. Those who felt them in connection with their daily lives knew that they were real. The trade-unionists knew that a war was being waged against oppression in the factory and in the workshop; and the working people generally, when not excited in relation to some deeply-seated prejudice, gave everywhere a welcome to those who sought to carry it on.

During the Congress of 1837, the trade-unionists or the United Mechanics, held a meeting in Manchester, and a deputation from that body attended the Congress, upon which occasion Mr. Owen addressed them. His advice was that their efforts should be mainly directed to self-employment; but the impediment then was, as it is now, the difficulty of applying funds raised to resist aggression on the part of employers who were opposed to any scheme of self-employment, and the objection urged by Robert Owen to strikes was met by the assertion that though strikes were an evil, they were resorted to chiefly for the purpose of preventing a worse evil for which no other remedy was within reach.

But the two acts of the Congress that most influenced the progress of the Socialist movement, were the removal of the *New Moral World*, the society's paper, to Manchester, and the appointment of a Central Board in Manchester to superintend and direct the movement from that town as a centre.

Alderman Heywood, then a young man in the publishing trade, undertook the printing and publishing of the paper. The appointment of the Central Board was a matter of much consequence. Everything depended on the energy and intelligence of its members. It was felt that if they did their work well as organisers and propagandists, a great advance might be made; but, on the other hand, if they failed in this respect the movement might languish and die. Robert Owen was appointed general chairman, or, as he was designated, "Social Father," the idea being to constitute the society as much as possible on the model of the family, and to blend the authority and kindliness of the family tie in the officers of the society. Owen resided chiefly in London, while the members of the "foreign department," as it was called, were located there, and consisted of six members, whose duty it was to correspond with persons outside the kingdom, who, as believers and friends, took an interest in the proceedings of the society. There were also seven provincial directors who attended to the districts into which the country had been divided, so that action over the whole might proceed with harmony, and without troubling the directors at the centre, who had charge of the movement in everything connected with its finances, its principles, and its general management. There were six of these elected by the Congress, namely, John Booth, vice-president of the society; John Green, William Baxter, Joseph Smith, and myself; George Alexander Fleming being at the same time appointed as general secretary and editor of the *New Moral World.*

The effect of the change in the management of the

society, and the removal of the society's paper from London to Manchester, was soon manifest. The exposition and advocacy of the leading ideas of the movement began to find illustration in a wider field. Such public questions, moreover, as had any bearing on the objects of the movement were made the subject of comment and discussion. Mr. Attwood's currency views, as explained by him in the House of Commons, were not approved by Robert Owen, who made the following reference to them in a letter addressed to the population of the United States of North America :—

"I have just read Mr. Thomas Attwood's speech in the House of Commons on the currency question. Although I have great respect for this gentleman, yet I have no faith in his currency views. No private individuals or association of individuals ought to be permitted to make a profit by the currency. The currency ought to be the representative of real wealth, to be capable of expanding and contracting with the expansion and contraction of wealth, and to be issued solely by the nation and for its benefit."

In the same letter the same subject is dealt with:—

"Why has the cry of distress come from your shores —a cry of poverty among your wealthy merchants, and of traders in money—a cry that America never suffered so much since the struggle which gave her independence, and that nothing but ruin is anticipated to all her more wealthy classes? Have you lost any of your land? Have your industrious classes diminished? Have you been deprived of your skill, of your industry, of your mechanical and chemical inventions or discoveries, or of any of your other

powers of production? Have you experienced famine, or any devastation from fire or water to destroy your wealth, or has any party robbed you of any—the smallest portion of it? No! None of these things have occurred; but yet you cry, 'We are in the deepest distress for want of money, and if we cannot obtain it, ruin from all quarters stares us in the face.' You are really then in distress for want of money, and if asked what money is, you reply, 'It is the representative of wealth, and without it we are powerless, and all our means of producing wealth itself are consequently useless.' This is, indeed, a most strange position for a people who have obtained all the political freedom they desired to possess. It is an anomaly new in the history of man; but it is one from which the most valuable knowledge may be derived."

After enumerating what the nation possessed as real wealth and the means to abundance, he goes on to say:—

"Now, with these advantages, if you do not set the example of national and individual superiority, prosperity, and happiness, you must be the worst conducted people under Heaven, for no population has ever been placed within such domestic, or surrounded by such foreign favourable circumstances as you may now secure to yourselves and children's children through all future ages. But you are now overwhelmed with distress; yes, just such distress as a child would experience who supposed he could not be happy without he had the moon for a plaything, and therefore cried and was tormented because no one would bring it to him. You want more money or you will be ruined! Why? Because, say you,

money is the representative of wealth, and the substance is of no use to us without we have the representative. This itself is abundantly childish, for while you have a vast superfluity of the substance, why, in the name of common-sense, cannot you devise the means of making a useful representative of it, co-extensive with the substance? You vainly imagine you must starve without gold or silver money, or paper to represent gold or silver. Yet these are no more representatives of wealth than iron and steel, or paper to represent them would be. A real representative of wealth can be created alone by the wealth itself, and must possess the capacity of being increased as real wealth increases, of being diminished as real wealth diminishes, and of being unchangeable in its value or estimation throughout society. And this representative of wealth ought to be made and issued alone by each nation, through such officers under its immediate control as the nation may appoint; the nation itself being the responsible party for its value to individuals and to other nations."

I have given these views on the money question not as correct (being, as they are, without any explanation of the process by which they were to be carried out), but because they are as nearly as possible in agreement with the view since put forward in American agitation on the money question.

Mr. Wyse, in the House of Commons, was, at this time, pressing the subject of education, and the *New Moral World* supported him in a leading article which appeared on September 23, 1837.

"The question must be answered in some way, and speedily. Great Britain must no longer put up with

the disgrace of being almost the only European nation in which the training of the rising generation is left to chance; nor must we longer continue to suffer the manifold evils which result from such a wretched and irrational mode of procedure. Yet the Government will not move in the matter until the people compel them, and the people cannot move until they are made generally to perceive the desirableness and the beneficial effects of a change in our educational institutions. . . . All thinking men must perceive that this question lies at the root of all our schemes of reform, and that any other course is a lopping of the branches of the moral upas which desolates society, while the root remains untouched—a useless war with effects, instead of boldly attacking and removing causes. . . . But this state of things must not be allowed to continue. We must no longer be distinguished among the nations by our advanced and proud position in a knowledge of phyical science and the arts of producing wealth, and marked at the same time for the intellectual darkness and social degradation of our producers, and our profound practical ignorance of moral science and the arts of producing happiness. The elements of social progression, now scattered in many directions, must be gathered together and brought to bear with a concentrated and continuous force upon the public mind, until all other questions succumb to this primary and radical object, and every British child be provided from infancy with a good, useful, impartial (unsectarian) education by the State."

The article goes on to call for united action on this question, in the interest of the nation; and then adds:—

"We consider we are in advance of the views held by many of the parties likely to be active in its support, it being a fixed opinion with us that any education, to be truly effectual, must combine good physical circumstances with mental instruction; yet believing, at the same time, that every step we take towards the enlightenment of the masses would create fresh powers for future and beneficial reforms, that, as they advance in intelligence, they would see more clearly the true cure for our social grievances and anomalies, which they now fail to perceive, entirely in consequence of the ignorance forced on them by the present institutions of society; we say, seeing this, that we shall at all times be found in the ranks of those who advocate the extension and systematising of intellectual tuition, based on the principle of imparting a knowledge of facts, unconnected with party prejudices or sectarian dogmas; and we believe that the numerous branch associations we are now forming throughout the country will be found valuable auxiliaries in the good work—composed, as they are, of the most reflective, intelligent, and moral portion of the productive classes."

Another question was that of shortening the hours of labour. This was almost necessarily a part of such an agitation as the Socialists had entered on. They had made the general improvement of the condition of the masses their chief object, and long hours in the factories and workshops constituted a serious hindrance to such an undertaking. With arguments as to the danger to our foreign trade from shortened hours of labour they had no sympathy. They were convinced that such arguments were the pleadings of un-

scrupulous selfishness. Such public documents as threw light on the subject were as accessible to them as to the friends of the manufacturers, and they knew that these pleadings were not entitled to respect. They were personally acquainted with the interior of the factories and workshops, and were not to be misled by men who were employed to deceive the public.

Two years previous to the time of which I am writing, Dr. Andrew Ure published his *Philosophy of Manufactures*, which in many respects was a useful and interesting work; but when he described the appearance of the people employed in the factories, especially the young women, he excited the disgust of those who lived in the daily presence of the actual things, and who knew how false the description was. He says :—

"So much nonsense has been uttered about the deformity and diseases of factory children, that I may hardly be credited by some of my readers when I assert that I have never seen among a like number of the young women of the lower ranks in any country so many pleasing countenances and handsome figures. . . . Their light labour and erect posture in tending the looms, and the habit which many of them have in exercising their arms and shoulders, as if with dumb-bells, by resting their hands on the lay or shuttle bearer, as it oscillates alternately backwards and forwards with the machinery, opens their chest, and gives them generally a graceful carriage. Many of them have adopted tasteful modes of wearing neat handkerchiefs on their heads, and have altogether not a little of the Grecian style of beauty. One of

them, whose cheeks had a fine rosy hue, being asked how long she had been at factory work, said 'Nine years,' and blushed from bashfulness at being so slightly spoken to."

We had no occasion to enter into argument with the people in the manufacturing districts on this subject, nor to lose time in citing medical testimony. Those we addressed knew the facts, and they knew that we were acquainted with them. And we all knew that these monstrous misrepresentations were matters of sale and purchase. This writer, however, goes further :—

"Nothing," he says, "shows in a clearer point of view the credulity of mankind in general, and of the people of these islands in particular, than the ready faith which was given to the tales of cruelty exercised by proprietors of cotton mills toward young children. The system of calumny resembles that brought by the Pagans against the Primitive Christians, of enticing children into their meetings in order to murder and devour them."

We felt how useless it would be to lose time in combating the falsehoods of self-interest among a people the greater part of whom could not be led astray on a subject in connection with which they had to spend their lives.

Another important question was that of Free Trade. The Anti-corn-law League had not then come into existence ; and therefore it was not known whether or not the manufacturers, as a body, would lend their aid to repeal the Corn Laws. We had not any connection with them, nor any means of influencing them, but we knew that the working classes were very

much interested in repeal. The *New Moral World* of August 5th, 1837, contained an article on Free Trade from which the following passage may be taken. "The only true principles," says the writer, Mr. G. A. Fleming, "on which a foreign commerce can rest with reciprocal benefit, is the free and unfettered exchange of their surplus commodities, that is, after every individual employed in their production has been well and amply supplied with them, the remaining portion, small or large, forms the legitimate and natural export wealth of the community. Thus, each country possesses the means of lodging, feeding, clothing, and educating its inhabitants, and the natural application of these means is to shelter, clothe, subsist, and educate all the people, before sending any of these necessaries abroad ; but if we neglect this, and export to other countries our necessaries, and receive from them only curiosities or things less necessary in return, we violate the principle of beneficial foreign commerce, and establish just such a free trade as now exists between Great Britain and Ireland, by which the inhabitants of the latter country are condemned to unending toil to ship from their harbours cargoes of grain, and all other staple productions of their country, whilst they themselves are cursed with an overflow of pauperism."

Ten years later in Ireland the madness of what is here referred to was proved by the starving to death of a million of the people of that country, while the food of the nation was being exported to pay exorbitant rent to landlords who were living in luxury in London, Paris, and other great capitals of Europe.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Disputed Question.

BETWEEN the congress of May, 1837, and that which took place the same month of 1838, the whole of the manufacturing districts were in a state of activity, and lecturers were sent up and down in all directions to address the people. Every week the pages of the *New Moral World* contained ten or a dozen reports, from the surrounding towns, of lectures delivered and discussions held.

Such a sudden awakening so aggressively manifested, had the appearance of a challenge to all recognized authorities. Ministers of all denominations were roused. Political economists denounced us as unscientific because we refused to accept their nostrums and because we protested against the wholesale manner in which they were doing the people to death on principle.

Owen was fiercely attacked from all sides. Public prejudice was excited to an extent which was both disagreeable and inconvenient. Halls that had been hired for public meetings, even when some of these meetings had been expensively advertised, were refused at the last moment. Owen was locked out of the Music Hall in Liverpool, notwithstanding a signed contract and a considerable outlay in calling the

meeting. This was a thing of frequent occurrence, but an appeal to the law would have done no good. The misconceptions and prejudices that existed had penetrated everywhere, and it was felt that the best policy was to bear with the wrong, and to endeavour to secure or build commodious halls for our own use. The objects Robert Owen and his followers had in view were strictly legal, and the means adopted to carry them out was in the highest degree peaceable. Legal proceedings were therefore avoided, and whatever the expedients resorted to, quietness and patience were, as a rule, relied on. In consequence of this policy, many very active opponents were in a little time brought over to the movement.

Looking back over the many years that have elapsed since 1837, it is right to acknowledge that the opposition met with, however irritating at the moment, was seldom vindictive or cruel. And although the questions we had undertaken to deal with, excited suspicion and alarm, the quiet manner in which we took the opposition, generally led to toleration of our proceedings, which, in the end, came to be regarded as legitimate, and as honestly entered on in the interest of the public. Religious people had come to believe that all religions were rejected and opposed by the Socialists, and therefore, their hostility was not to be wondered at. It is a curious fact, however, that a considerable party in the country, who openly professed unbelief and attacked religion in a sense of public duty, also opposed us very strongly.

Richard Carlile, who had suffered years of imprisonment for his unbelief, regarded us as his most dangerous enemies, though he had never met with opposition

from us. Carlile was a quiet man, of gentlemanly demeanour, but combative and determined. The following letter which he addressed to the editor of the *New Moral World* shows the spirit in which he opposed us :—

"Sir,—Having read over the professed discussion at Huddersfield about the principles of Mr. Owen, between the Rev. Mr. Dalton and Mr. Lloyd Jones, I was disappointed at not finding the subject really touched by Mr. Dalton. In connection with my intention to visit every town in Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire in the course of the present year, to oppose wherever I may find an association under the name of Mr Owen's principles, I offer to meet Mr. Fleming at Huddersfield, on the same terms as Mr. Dalton met Mr. Jones, if arrangements can be made. I care not how early the day or days, so as they be not Sunday or Monday.

"I do not make choice of Mr. Fleming, but use his name because he has put it forward ; and as I wish to avoid all impertinence, I hope I may be excused in saying that I would rather meet Mr. Owen himself anywhere—in Manchester, Liverpool, or where best. I hereby offer to meet one or all of the associated body of men calling themselves socialists—a silly and unmeaning title, by-the-by—having the feeling, the conviction, and the will to show that on their proposed ground they can make no beneficial change in the present state of society, and that as to their building scheme they are not acting on one sound or rational principle.—I am, &c., RICHARD CARLILE.

"Oldham, Jan, 31, 1838."

It fell to the lot of the writer to undertake such discussions as were entered on with Richard Carlile. One was held in Manchester, one in Bradford, and one or two elsewhere. Carlile was a man of cool temper, and in discussion behaved with candour and fairness. He had, as a publisher, issued a large amount of anti-Christian literature, chiefly of an argumentative and philosophic character, which had brought him under the notice of the Attorney-General. He was several years in prison, much to the disgrace of the Government of the day, and it, perhaps, was not pleasant, when he came out, to find a new party in possession of the field, with a new set of ideas, and a new policy which attached no importance to mere negative ideas. It was the business of the Socialists to teach the people what to believe, instead of what not to believe. It was a conviction with them that when truth took possession of the public mind error would die out of itself.

Mr. Carlile had been so long in active conflict with what he believed to be mischievous error, that he could not agree with our mode of action, and, therefore, we had his opposition. The habit of his mind necessarily rendered him feeble in discussing questions nearly altogether positive and practical. It was necessary to be acquainted with the condition of education in the country, and to have some conception of plans for its improvement. It was necessary, also, to know the effect of the manufacturing system on the condition of the people, and to entertain and understand measures for altering it. Mr. Carlile's mind had been employed on quite a different class of subjects, and in the discussion of these the Socialists

found little to interest them. He was really a clever man, but he seemed more at home in exposition than in discussion, and to feel that the principles and facts to be dealt with required more examination and study than he had been able to give them. I judge this to be the conclusion he had arrived at, as his antagonism was in a short time abandoned, although some of his less able followers continued long after to offer an active though not a very effective opposition.

The fact of not adopting extreme anti-Christian views was brought as a charge against Owen by anti-religious zealots. They thought they had hit on the right way of establishing truth, and not to accept their method and their views was considered as cowardice. But from the beginning the Socialists condemned and opposed such a policy, and held that criticism of false ideas on general subjects is an endless task; that when such criticism is applied to the dogmas of religious sects, it draws after it prejudices and hatreds that had much better be avoided, if for no other reasons than that they constitute the most effectual hindrances to progress.

It has, on the other hand, been insisted upon that the socialism of Robert Owen was actively and intentionally hostile to the Christian faith. The charge that it was a deliberate and combined attack on religion was used as a justification of the conduct of those who so unscrupulously misrepresented and denounced the movement as anti-religious and anarchical. Facts have already been adduced to repel this accusation. The great aim of the leaders of the movement was to suppress all attacks on religious opinions of whatever kind, and for this purpose every

possible effort was made to hold enthusiasts and bigots in check.

The society insisted on the most complete toleration of each other by the members, whether they were fervid believers or extreme unbelievers; but as the members were drawn indiscriminately from the public, a kindly toleration all round was a most difficult thing to enforce: as men brought with them their old habits of thinking and speaking, and frequently gave pain to each other without intending it. A discipline of charity and kindness had been introduced, which in time produced excellent fruit, but a society daily drawing new members into its ranks was always more or less subject to have its peace disturbed by bigotries difficult to control. Besides this, certain of the members and others in their criticisms of religion and religious opponents, had, though speaking on their own authority simply, led to the belief that the movement was hostile to religion, when, in fact, its opposition was solely directed against an intolerant condemnation of freedom of thought. Large numbers of people who were sincere believers were eager to join the movement, but they were unwilling to do so without guarding, so far as they could, against being mistaken on a point so important. The mode of affiliating branches was to receive an application for a charter, and if there were no reason why it should not be granted, a framed and engraved document was issued to be hung up in the branch institution, and by this the branch was known to have accepted the laws and principles of the society.

An application of this sort was made from Edin-

burgh, accompanied by a communication which fully raised the question of religious policy, and as the document and the replies to it from the officers of the society are unreserved and explicit, the simple reproduction of such parts as deal directly with the religious aspects of the subject will explain the position taken up by the Socialist movement. When this application was made to the Central Board, with a request that it might be published in the society's paper, the editor at once complied, prefacing it with these words :—

"The following application for a charter has been forwarded from our friends in Edinburgh with a request for its insertion in our pages. We cheerfully give it a place, and trust that the manly independence of its sentiments is universal among the social body. The world has been ruined by man and name worship, and its happiness wrecked upon the rocks of verbal disputation. The projectors of a new state of society must take care to avoid both errors."

In this case, what applied to Edinburgh applied to the whole society in all its branches, and, as the documents now under consideration were published for the perusal of the whole society at the time, the explanations asked for and given, should leave no doubt in the mind of any candid person in regard to the policy pursued by the society.

If there was anything true of Robert Owen as a public man, it was that he never sailed under false colours at any period of his life. It never troubled him that people differed from his views, or condemned him for entertaining them. He knew that to be mistaken and misrepresented was inevitable

when the ideas promulgated were new, or difficult to understand, or if they were opposed to the interests or prejudices of any large section of the public. With this sort of impediment, he had to deal in the best way he could. But neither he, nor those belonging to the society at the head of which he stood, studied how to lay before the public the principles in which they believed, for the purpose of entrapping proselytes under false pretences. They stated their objects with care, and what these were declared to be at the beginning, they remained to the end, while their advocacy from first to last was open and consistent.

It has been said that when attacked by the Bishop of Exeter and others, the policy of the Socialists was changed out of fear for the consequences. There is not a single fact by which such a charge can be justified. The principal accusation brought against them is that they made it part of their business to attack religion, whereas, in fact, they made it a special duty to discountenance attacks on religion. What the leaders of the society desired was the most unreserved expression of thought on matters of public interest, especially those connected with their own proceedings, provided always that no offence was unnecessarily given.

It could not be expected that liberty of speech would not be sometimes abused by those who in advocating their opinions, were betrayed into a want of consideration for the opinions of others; but the following correspondence to which allusion has just been made, will, I think, show that the general spirit of the association was not antagonistic to religious belief.

"We, the undersigned inhabitants of Edinburgh, in the county of Midlothian, having been made acquainted with the objects, principles, and laws of the 'Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists,' and being desirous of promoting the objects of that society, and willing to abide by the laws which are now promulgated, or which may be from time to time enacted, in accordance with the constitution of the society, do hereby request that a charter may be granted to us to open a branch of the society in Edinburgh."

To prevent any mistake, however, as to what the Edinburgh applicants meant by this step, the following was added :—

"We regard the objects for which we seek to be associated with you as strictly of a moral and economical, and not at all of a theological character, as involving no collision with the different religions of mankind, except in so far as these religions are opposed to the fundamental facts of our system. . . In other words, by assuming the name of Rational Religionists, we do not intend to found or to form a religious sect, but only to declare that we consider the public or professed religion of this society, in so far as it lays claim to any peculiarity, to consist in the pursuit of knowledge, and in the love and practice of goodness in all its forms. But we do not mean to say that other religions may not or do not possess these characteristics, whose excellence we acknowledge in whatever sex, class, sect, party, country, or colour they may be found."

One of the paragraphs of the Edinburgh letter had reference to the use of the pronoun "It" as applied

to the Deity, but this was rather a matter of taste and form. Another contained the following declaration.

"Our adhesion to the constitution and laws of the society shall not be held to infer the slightest relinquishment on our part of the great principle of Protestantism—the right of free inquiry and of private judgment in matters of religion—a right which is destructive of the domination of all Churches or bodies of men over individual opinions, or which may rather be said to constitute every man, in his own proper person, a separate and independent church, amenable to no other jurisdiction than the court of his own conscience, and from which right flows the corresponding duty of respecting the conscientious convictions of our neighbour."

These extracts bear upon two or three points of some consequence; one, that the men who joined the movement were not those who entered lightly and thoughtlessly on the labour the society imposed, without understanding the relative rights of the society, and the individuals who made up its membership; another, that the principles and policy of the society were clearly defined, and the spirit in which the work was carried on distinctly stated and understood—also that arbitrary dictation in matters of opinion on the part of the leaders, and submission on the part of the members, was neither expected or permitted.

In its reply the Central Board declares the objects of the society to be "moral and economical, not of a theological character, and involving no collision with the different religions of mankind." It considers the

sentiments of the applicants "perfectly in accordance with the objects and principles of the society."

To an objection on the part of the Edinburgh men to be bound by any of the writings of Robert Owen, except such as the constitution of the society accepted, it replies : "The Board consider that the subscribing to the principles and laws of the society does not in any way involve assent to all the writings of Robert Owen, and they further conceive that the great Protestant principle—the right of free inquiry and private judgment in all matters of religion—is a right which is especially set forth in articles 19 and 21 of the laws as pertaining to all members of the society, and they consider it to be a most sacred privilege."

"Many of the applicants," the Edinburgh letter said, "are Christians from sincere conviction. They see in the principles of the society nothing but an attempt to reduce to practice the precepts of the religion of Jesus Christ, which, unfortunately for the world, have hitherto existed in theory only. The philosophy of the system, even to its minutest details, they find to be not only in harmony with, but to spring directly from, the principles of that religion, interpreted by enlightened reason ; and they cannot therefore but regret the false position, as it seems to them, into which Socialism has been thrown, of apparent antagonism to a religion whose corruptions only it opposes. Mr. Owen has, like every other human being, his own peculiar notions in regard to religion, and expresses these freely in his works ; but by joining the society we wish it to be distinctly understood that we embrace neither Mr. Owen's religious opinions, nor those of any other man or body of men ; but

assert our own individual right to form an independent judgment on all such matters."

The following words express very distinctly the views of Mr. Owen on the religious part of the subject, and may be taken as indicating the position occupied by the Socialists :

"The Board most readily express their complete concurrence in your opinion, that Socialism is in harmony with the Christian religion, interpreted by enlightened reason, and they would add that they consider it to be the only means by which that religion, so interpreted, can ever be established in universal practice over the earth. . . . The Central Board most earnestly desire that the society may be an effectual means by which all may be brought to hear the voice of truth, that disunion of feeling may be destroyed, and that all mankind may become one fold under one shepherd."

It may be mentioned that during the whole agitation the Edinburgh branch was one of the most active and loyal.

When the missionaries and teachers were appointed in 1838, Robert Owen, as president of the society, published an address to them, containing instruction and advice. "If," he said, "you should be challenged to hold discussions on religious mysteries or dogmas, you will kindly and respectfully decline by stating that the authority by which you are appointed, and under which you act, will not permit you to occupy your time in discussions which arouse angry, irrational feelings, tending to separate man from man."

The policy indicated was deliberately adopted, and it will be seen how little it sanctioned attacks on religion.

CHAPTER IX.

The Bishop of Exeter. Popular Agitations.

FROM what has been stated, the objects of the Socialists and the methods they adopted for the purpose of carrying them out, will be understood. Education of the people; village communities, where production and distribution were to be carried on equitably, were the primary objects; but, in connection with these, all Liberal questions were to be taken up and advocated. Free trade, a free press, short time in factories and workshops, free discussion, and all else that directly, or indirectly, had a tendency to improve the condition of the masses.

In addition to the missionaries appointed, numbers of young men became active for the furtherance of the work in hand. These proceedings attracted too much attention to remain unnoticed, and hence zealous advocates for the preservation of things as they were, took the field in opposition. Chief among these was a man named Brindley, whose zeal was of that violent kind which defeats its own object, and by exaggeration assists refutation. The most formidable of all the opponents of the socialist movement, however, was Henry, Bishop of Exeter. It has been said that he fought his way to his bishopric by his energy and unscrupulousness as a writer of pamphlets. He

was the busy, and not over-scrupulous person satirised by Moore as "The Rev. Pamphleteer":

> "All prais'd the skilful jockeyship,
> Loud rang the Tory cheer,
> While away, away, with spur and whip,
> Went the Reverend Pamphleteer.
>
> "The hack he rode how could it err?
> 'Twas the same that took last year,
> That wonderful jump to Exeter
> With the Reverend Pamphleteer.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "'Stop, stop,' said Truth, but vain her cry
> Left far away in the rear;
> She heard but the usual 'gay good-bye'
> From her faithless Pamphleteer."

The bishop, whatever his zeal, possessed no real power to impede the socialist movement. He could only excite anger against it, in men of the same spirit with himself, from the pulpit; and lamentations and exclamations of horror in the House of Lords, where his denunciations were delivered. It was too late to frame laws against new heresies, and as the few years during which the agitation had been carried on had to some extent opened the eyes of the people, his mis-statements and exaggerations were seen through by thinking men, and by those who possessed influence among the masses of the people. There was in reality no apprehension on the part of the Socialists as to the capability of the bishop to injure them, and, therefore, from the platform and in the columns of the *New Moral World*, he was treated as an angry man who had lost his temper, and with it a respect for

truth. The first proceeding of the bishop was to present a petition, on the 24th of January, 1840, to the House of Lords, signed by 4,000 of the clergy, bankers, merchants, manufacturers, and other inhabitants of Birmingham, setting forth the evils of socialism, and praying that means might be taken to put a stop to its progress. The speech accompanying the petition was long and laboured, and crowded with mis-statements; and it is certain the information on which he spoke was gathered with no greater scrupulousness than usually marks such proceedings.

The bishop seems to have employed certain people to attend the social halls, and report to him the horrible things said, and, certainly as given by his lordship to the House of Peers, they were bad enough. He also related stories of dreadful deaths of unbelievers, and old tales that had served for a long time to frighten people into the ordinary orthodoxies of the world. Lord Brougham, with courage equal to his ability, defended Mr. Owen's character, first on the testimony of Mr. Wilberforce, and next on his own personal knowledge of Owen. He assured the House that he had never before heard of the outrageous charges brought against the Socialists by the bishop. The Marquis of Normanby also made a long speech, in which he threw doubt on the correctness of the bishop's statements, and twitted him with supporting his charges by extracts from papers printed a considerable time before the Government took office. Lord Melbourne took some trouble to defend himself for having presented Mr. Owen at Court, with an address signed by a large number of people, and protested against being held responsible for Socialistic

opinions, because he had performed a mere formal act. The Duke of Wellington delivered himself indignantly, especially in regard to the presentation to the Queen. The Earl of Galloway was more indignant still at the atrocity of such an act. On the same night the Socialists petitioned the House for inquiry, but this their lordships did not want, being satisfied w th the matter in the form in which the bishop had given it to them. It is a curious fact that during the delivery of all this indignation it was never mentioned that Robert Owen was a friend of Her Majesty's father; and that, of all those who assisted in the promotion of his views, there was no one more zealous or constant than the Duke of Kent. Possibly the noble speakers did not remember that while they were labouring to insult and degrade Robert Owen, their effort included the father of the Sovereign for whom they were expressing such unbounded reverence.

The society met the bishop in the following way. They extracted from his speech every accusation it contained, and appended to each a distinct refutation. Most of the charges made have already been dealt with, and need not be again referred to, except in a few instances. One of the points most strongly urged in the House of Lords by the bishop, was the danger and wickedness of the doctrine of non-responsibility. It is true that the Socialists insisted that to rely for the prevention of crime solely on the punishment it entailed, was a mistake; that it was unreasonable to punish miserable creatures for the commission of crimes which, in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases, were the result of the state in which they were suffered to grow up. It was held to be an immoral act on

the part of society to leave the young to ignorance and misery, and then punish them for doing those things which their ignorance and frequently the cruel necessities of their lives led them to do. But the idea of non-responsibility was never urged as capable of being acted on in the existing state of society, but rather as an argument to stimulate public action in the direction of national education, and the establishment of a condition of things in which the natural and legitimate wants of all should be considered.

It was a condemnation of an unwise reliance on penalties, and not a doctrine the promulgation of which was likely to lead to the commission of crime by insisting on its impunity. In fact, the charges of the Bishop of Exeter were in the very worst spirit of unjust accusation, and the part played by the House of Lords in listening to them with approval was not calculated to elevate its character in the estimation of sensible and fair-minded people.

The bishop declared that "he had always deemed Mr. Owen not to be a bloody-minded man. Up to this period he had considered him a visionary; but he was now of opinion, from a part of the controversy that Mr. Owen had had with Mr. Roebuck, that he must look upon him in a different light. In that passage there was an appearance of a tendency to bloodshed." Owen replied to this uncharitable imputation by describing the many evils of society, and stating his reasons for seeking to make such improvements as he thought conducive to the welfare of the community. The sanguine belief entertained by Owen, led him to conclude that the new ideas he was engaged in teaching, and the new practices he

was recommending would supersede the old ideas and practices which he condemned. He says in the "Manifesto," by which he replied, "The new moral and sane system cannot otherwise interfere with the old immoral and insane system of the world than by causing its gradual and peaceable destruction and entire annihilation: and this is now evident by the consternation of all who have been taught to think that they have some pecuniary interest in maintaining this old worn-out irrational system." It is clear that while the bishop believed that he meditated abolishing every old law and institution by bloodshed, Owen himself was fully convinced that the bishop and his Church establishment, and many other things that he held to be irrational, would by mere pressure of a reformed public opinion pass into disuse. The bishop's error, it need scarcely be said, carried him far away from truth and Christian calmness of spirit.

There is given in Owen's manifesto, a brief account of the labours of his life, touching by its simplicity of statement, and the evidence it bears to his activity and devotion to the welfare of others. The bishop was not bound to know what Owen had done, or what manner of man he really was; but before making such abominable charges, it is not unreasonable to think that he ought to have entered on some inquiry as to their truth. Robert Owen had been known to the world for his humane exertions for above thirty years, and his reputation was without stain. His worst enemies admitted the purity of his motives, and when the worst imputations were made, and public prosecution solicited, some little investigation should

have been regarded as a decent if not a necessary preliminary.

Robert Owen bore the abuse and threatenings of the bishop without any kind of personal disquiet. To the threat of a legal crusade, he replied, "I am the discoverer, founder, and open promulgator of this system, and of all the error, immorality, and blasphemy which it contains (if a particle of either can be found in it). I alone am the author, and, therefore, I alone ought to be, if anyone shall be, prosecuted and punished for the wickedness that may be extracted from it." This manifesto goes on to say :—

"From the beginning of my career, when I had no one to support me, I had, for the cause of truth, to place myself in direct and open opposition to all the most deeply-rooted prejudices of the past ages. I then anticipated and made up my mind to incur fines, imprisonment, and death; and what are these to an individual when his mind and feelings are deeply imbued with a desire permanently to benefit the human race? But instead of fines, imprisonment, or death, I have been a favourite of the world, have lived a quiet, peaceful, and unostentatious life, happy in myself, and in my family; which in New Lanark, in Scotland, and in New Harmony, in America, has been one of the most happy families on either side of the Atlantic. It is true, I have always expended to the last shilling my surplus wealth in promoting this great and good cause, for funds have always been much required to hasten its progress as I desired. But the right rev. prelate is greatly deceived when he says, as he is reported to have said, that I had squandered my wealth in profligacy and luxury. I have never ex-

pended a pound in either. All my habits are habits of temperance in all things ; and I challenge the right rev. prelate, and all his abettors, to prove the contrary, and I will give him and them the means of following me through every stage and month of my life. Having made this statement, I mean not to trouble myself with what any parties may say, in or out of the Houses of Parliament. My life is the true answer to any falsehood that may be stated."

From 1830 to close upon 1850, the working men in England and Scotland were active in agitating for measures which they believed to be of importance to their class. At the commencement of this period, Tory influence, in connection with the Government of the country, was in the ascendant. It had received a serious blow by the forced abolition of the penal laws in 1829, and it was again threatened by the introduction of a Reform Bill that was declared to be revolutionary ; but the old spirit of exclusion and monopoly, in the holders of office, was still rampant. The people, however, had begun to feel that they possessed power which might be turned to good account when they could come to an understanding with each other as to how it could be best used. Impressed with the conviction that agitation was necessary before anything desirable could be obtained, they went into combination with the middle classes for the purpose of forcing on Parliament the reform measure of 1832.

The training acquired in connection with the agitation necessary to carry this measure, was of great value to them in their battle for a cheap press ; which was followed by the Chartist agitation. There was,

in addition to these, the short time agitation, all being intensified by the distress which existed among the people and which was made doubly unbearable by the enactment of the new poor law, and its administration. There were disturbances in the manufacturing districts, and plug-drawing; while in the agricultural districts there were swing riots and nightly fires, lit by the match of the incendiary, blazing in all directions. Robert Owen and his followers had no influence in the agricultural districts, and, therefore, could do nothing to check such a spirit; but in the big towns of Lancashire, Yorkshire, and other counties, where manufacturing operations were carried on, they were active, while doing all in their power to help forward the measures agitated for by the people, in preventing resort to any kind of violence or lawlessness. This was, in the circumstances then existing, a difficult work. Robert Owen believed that if the people committed themselves so far as to come into collision with the troops, the worst consequences would follow. He had many times stated, in his addresses, that the working men should in every way short of a sacrifice of principle, labour to get the middle classes on their side. He was convinced that the knowledge of business they possessed was necessary for working out effectively the plans he had promulgated for improving the condition of society, and he deprecated anything calculated to widen the breach already existing between them and the masses of the people. He felt very strongly that any kind of extensive outbreak of violence would lead to much bloodshed and destruction of property. The troops which were spread throughout the midland and

northern counties, were under the command of Sir Charles James Napier. There can be no doubt that they would have put down any popular rising that might have taken place, but nobody felt more keenly than Napier himself how difficult the task would be, if, through discontent in the large towns, simultaneous risings and widely-diffused attacks on life or property should take place. He was a man full of resource, ability, and courage, yet he repeatedly protested against the scattering of the force under his command for the protection of outlying places, where manufacturers and other persons were alarmed for their safety; and he complained of the disinclination of such persons to do anything, either by enrolling themselves as volunteers or providing proper accommodation for detachments of the soldiery sent for their protection. He was also apprehensive that billeting the soldiers in the public-houses, where they would almost necessarily become friendly with the discontented people, endangered their loyalty, and that even should their loyalty not suffer, they would be at the mercy of those who, in case of a raising, would defeat, and, it might be, destroy them piecemeal.

In the journal kept by Sir Charles at this time, we find the following entries:

"Manchester, May 8, 1839.—All quiet for the moment, but all information speaks of a rising on Whit Monday. May 9.—I have over and over again stated the danger of having billets. Why will they not let me hire barracks? The country cannot be protected by detachments. Let the gentlemen and yeomanry defend themselves; local defence should meet local attacks; I cannot, I will not give troops.

Yet I have not called in any detachment, because if that were now done the people would rise, and the blame be cast on me; moreover, with so little knowledge of this district it would be too decided a step—all that can be done is to put some infantry in buildings where the cavalry are in billets. I have, by letter, endeavoured to animate magistrates and colonels of yeomanry, but all were apathetic, all wanting soldiers, and doing nothing for themselves."[1]

Writing on May the 23rd, of the defence of Manchester, he says:

"All the north-east of Manchester is riotous, the south quiet. Which of the seven positions indicated should be occupied would depend on the place where the mob assembled; but in each my left is protected by the river, my right by the canal, and they are shorter than they look, as only the openings of streets need be guarded, and a few windows occupied. The bridges could be easily barricaded and defended by the armed citizens, and from any one position men could be detached against the rioters if needed, or an advance made with my whole force."

There follows this account of the preparations made for suppressing Chartism, a proclamation, unsigned, calling on the Chartists to see that their arms were ready and that their ammunition was sufficient, as in a day or two, at a moment's notice, they were to be called upon to take the field. "Now or never," concludes this sanguinary document, "is the time. Be sure you do not neglect your arms, and when you strike, do not let it be with sticks or stones, but let the blood of all you suspect moisten the soil of your

[1] Charles Napier's Life, vol. ii., p. 26.

native land, that you may for ever destroy even the remembrance of your poverty and shame." Sir Charles was very anxious to call out the yeomanry, but got no encouragement from the Government, or, with but few exceptions, from the gentlemen of the district. Writing to Mr. Phillips, he says:

"It is an operation of great expense; but when I consider the extent of the present bad spirit, and of the armings, I cannot but hold the opinion that it is absolutely necessary to concentrate the greatest possible force to overcome the people of this district. The primary object is to save the country from devastation, expense must therefore be a secondary consideration. The Chartists affirm that they have 250,000 men armed in Lancashire alone. This is probably a lie, but if they can assemble 50,000 the most dreadful ravages would be committed by the march of such a body; hence any inconvenience it may cause to gentlemen in the yeomanry, to put them on permanent duty will be trivial to what they would suffer if the Chartists get under arms."[1]

I give these extracts to show the state of the manufacturing districts, the spirit of the people, and the apprehensions of the authorities. During this time the leading men in the Socialist movement were not idle. They felt how deplorable a rising of the people would be, not only in its consequences to the people themselves, but in the effect it was almost certain to have on the future propagation of liberal opinion. They knew better than the authorities did what was going forward. The only mode the latter possessed of obtaining information was by their spies, and the

[1] Vol. ii., p. 31.

information these communicated seems to have been full of invention and exaggeration. The Socialists were in the habit of visiting the various neighbourhoods where disaffection was most widely spread and most active. The people came to them to consult them and ask advice. Fathers and mothers, whose sons had become participators in the preparations for the intended struggle, came to solicit their aid in holding them back; while many of the men themselves, who believed in the propriety and necessity of what they were doing, also consulted them. The members of the society considered it a duty to go among the Chartists to beg of them not to risk the cause of progress by an outbreak, which could only end in failure and needless bloodshed.

Having done all they could privately, they met in council to discuss the propriety of taking some public step for the purpose of expressing strong disapproval of physical force as a means of pushing forward reform. It was decided to call a large public meeting, and instead of several resolutions and a number of speakers, to have but one speaker and one resolution, the seconder to confine himself simply to formally seconding the resolution. I was the person appointed to deliver the address, and I felt that a very important and delicate task had been imposed on me. The announcement caused a lively commotion among the Chartists of Manchester and the surrounding towns, and when the time for the meeting arrived, the Carpenters' Hall in Manchester, which held about 2,000 people, was densely packed, the audience for the most part standing, while outside there was a crowd of people amounting to between four and five thousand.

My friends were apprehensive that an attack would be made on me, and massed themselves between me and the body of the meeting. For myself I can say that I never for a moment considered myself in danger. I had at that time much experience in addressing public meetings, and always found that the people were disposed to listen patiently and act peaceably when addressed in a spirit of sympathetic earnestness.

I had carefully arranged what I had to say, not in words, but in regard to the general order of my ideas, leaving to the inspiration of the moment the form in which I should utter them. I referred to the wrongs of which the people complained; to the existence of popular ignorance, together with ample means for a system of national education; to the long hours of labour in the factories, mines, and workshops of the country; to the denial of political power, which rendered the people impotent to peaceably remove the evils they were called upon to endure; to the taxation of the newspaper press, which constituted a bar to the acquisition by them of political knowledge. When I had dwelt briefly on their grievances and admitted the evils resulting from the abuses against which they protested, I found myself on the best possible terms with my audience. I then told them that the only difference between them and the Socialists was as to the best means of putting right what was wrong. Having stated this, I referred to their chance of success in opposition to a drilled and disciplined army skilfully led, and backed by every influence that the prejudices or fears of the middle and upper classes could bring to bear in such a conflict. I contrasted this with the lack on the part of the people of every-

thing necessary to ensure success in such a struggle. No arms, no discipline, no military leaders, no money, no commissariat; nothing, in fact, but their cause, their poverty, and their angry impatience, which, if for a short time successful, would lead to plunder and destruction of property, and, in the end, to such disorder as would make it the business of every man who had anything to lose to assist in hunting them down.

I then told them that up to that point my argument dealt chiefly with the practicability, not with the propriety or the justice, of attempting to rectify the evils of society by violence. As I went on to show how difficult it was to make the required rectifications, except in peace, and with thoughtfulness and care, unless the intention was to set up one set of wrongs on the ruins of another, the meeting seemed to assent most willingly. I concluded by pointing out how failure in a physical conflict would throw them back, and fasten them down as thralls of brute force, while in a peaceful and intelligent endeavour for the establishment of justice, every step forward was secured. I conjured them to give up all thought of putting matters right by remaining idle, for a month's holiday was then the intention of the Chartist leaders —a sacred month, as it was called. I told them there was nothing sacred in idleness, that redemption to them and theirs must come, and could only come by thinking and working, that all else was delusion and must end in disaster. The most marked attention was paid to every word I said. Indeed, I can truly say that I never addressed a more orderly and attentive meeting.

When the resolution embodying these views was moved and seconded, it was carried, with only about half-a-dozen dissentients, and amid great applause. The test as to the temper of the people was thus fairly made. It proved to us, at least, that though there might be local disturbances, there could be no revolution, and in this conviction we laboured, not without success, among the Chartists; not to persuade them out of their opinions, which in the main we regarded as correct and sound, but out of whatever intention they had of carrying them into effect by the help of physical force.

CHAPTER X.

Progress and Opposition.

It is not necessary to claim for the Socialists any special credit for preventing an outbreak of violence in the manufacturing districts during the Chartist agitation. They knew that the reports made day by day in the newspapers were gross exaggerations, and they suspected that those who were labouring to create a political terror had unworthy purposes of their own to serve which would be defeated if the people could be prevented from breaking the law.

The principles and policy of the social reformers alike made them active with this object. Their influence was, therefore, zealously exercised to prevent any destruction of life or property, and while the Bishop of Exeter and others were busy exciting the anger of the general public against Robert Owen and the Socialists, whom they denounced as promoters of bloodshed and enemies to property, these were labouring to prevent violence. That the authorities were not quite so ignorant of this matter as the bishop, may be seen by the following fact. When the fever created by the bishop was at its worst, Sir Charles Shaw Kennedy, who was at the head of the police of the district, and whose headquarters were in Manchester, sent to the Social Institution, requesting

that a deputation might wait on him at the Town Hall, and four or five persons were sent of whom I was one. When we arrived, and were shown into his private office, he told us that what he had read in the papers had made him desirous to inquire for himself what groundwork there was for the extraordinary reports about us and our proceedings that had found their way into the press. He then went over the heads on which he desired information, and without hesitation or consultation we replied fully on every point.

Sir Charles expressed his belief in the truth of what we told him, and became, in his turn, quite frank in relation to his own views of the action we had taken. He referred to the great meeting held in the Carpenters' Hall for the purpose of protesting against the national holiday, and told us he was so apprehensive that violence would be offered to me, that he had sent to the meeting in plain clothes every officer that could be spared. Before parting, he said, "I quite believe what you have told me, and I utterly disbelieve what is said against you. I have means," he continued, "of finding out what you are doing, and if a committee of inquiry should call on me, I am prepared to state that you have laboured honestly to preserve the peace, and to express my belief that had it not been for the influence exercised by your people in this district, nothing could have prevented bloodshed."

During this period the *Times* newspaper abused Robert Owen in "good set terms." His practices were spoken of as "monstrous abominations," "beastialities," "matured and infernal atrocities,"

while he himself and the men who agreed with him were described as "execrable monsters." The following extract deals with a reference made by the Marquis of Normanby to Owen's benevolence :—

"That this egotistic old Welshman has spent a deal of money in the diabolical attempt to Owenise the community we do not mean to deny, but where did that money come from, and under what understanding did he receive it? When Owen, who originally had scarcely a shilling of his own, married Miss Dale, of Glasgow, with whom he obtained a large fortune, he was a rigid orthodox Dissenter. In virtue of his religious profession alone he inherited the immense funds of David Dale, his father-in-law, who, had he entertained the slightest anticipation of Owen's apostacy, would sooner have engulfed them in the Clyde. It is very true there was no testamentary destination of these funds to prevent the application of them in any way whatever; but, with the perfect knowledge which the legatee had, as well of the testator's pre-eminent devotedness to the interests of pure religion and morality, as of the horror he would have felt at the possible prostitution of his property for the subversion of those interests, there was undoubtedly such a moral obligation not to misapply Mr. Dale's estate to purposes foreign to the convictions under which he bequeathed it as must have effectually controlled every upright man in determining its practical application. What is called Owen's benevolence, therefore, is substantially a breach of trust."

With the exception of the statement that Owen was married to Miss Dale, there is not a particle of truth in this abominable attack on the character of a

public man. Owen did not receive a large fortune with Miss Dale, nor did he spend for the propagation of his principles a penny out of any funds but those made in his own business. Out of his fortune obtained in trade, he purchased lands in the United States, which were settled on his family, an annual sum being reserved for his own use. Whatever money he spent was, in the strictest sense, his own, and neither his necessities nor his inclinations led him to traffic in his principles. It is doubtful whether there ever lived a public man whose motives were more pure or whose conduct was more free from anything approaching to merited censure.

I have been informed by those who were with him when these attacks were made upon him, that he wrote to the *Times*, to correct its misrepresentations, but his letter was not inserted. He then sent an advertisement of his works, that those who were so disposed might judge for themselves of his aims and intentions, but this was also refused insertion. Against this sort of attack there is no defence, unless other members of the press are disposed to open their columns. This was the case to some limited extent when charges of assassination were brought against Mazzini. It was the case, also, when charges of exciting to plunder were made against Messrs. Cobden and Bright. Owen, however, had no means of reply. He was declared to be an enemy of religion, family, and property, and the press generally felt it a duty to pour its wrath on his head, and at the same time prevent, so far as it could, explanation, denial, or protest. In these days, when the character of a public man had to be destroyed, there was an auda-

city, an unscrupulousness and a dash not to be surpassed.

It is a curious fact in connection with popular leaders and their efforts, that the chief force by which they are, as a rule, opposed, should be the force of personal calumny and malicious imputation. It is questionable whether the history of popular movements can furnish one case in contradiction to this statement. The purest motives, the most blameless life, the noblest aims, give no security against this vile custom, whenever, in the cause of truth or of public justice, an interest is disturbed or a prejudice touched. Owen's life was altogether exceptional, by its temperance, its kindliness, its devotion and sacrifice. He thought no ill, he practised no wrong, and never under any provocation returned evil for evil, and yet he was represented day by day as a monster of iniquity, whose life had been spent in planning and advocating spoliation of property, corruption of morals, and of everything that men prize as tending to sanctify human life.

During these days of conflict, Robert Owen was employing himself in preaching and teaching the leading ideas of his system, by the adoption of which he hoped to see the comfort of the people and the prosperity of the nation increased ; and, above all, the intelligence of the people so improved by sound education as to secure a satisfactory progress for the country. An examination of the *New Moral World* will show that at this time increased opposition only produced increased activity and determination ; and while misrepresentation and falsehood may have caused timid and bigoted people to keep at a distance

from the movement, the courageous and inquiring were in large numbers attracted to it.

Those who were active as writers and speakers on behalf of Robert Owen's ideas, so far as these ideas were accepted by the social movement, did not confine themselves to mere defensive action. The war was carried into the enemy's camp. The plan was to collect the statistics of education for the purpose of proving a criminal neglect of duty on the part of the Government, the Church, and others in authority, who, while wrangling over political party differences and rival sectarian dogmas, were allowing the people to remain in an ignorance so deplorable that they were incapable of understanding, much less performing, the most ordinary and necessary duties of everyday life. The socialist teachers had free access everywhere to the homes of the people. Even the very poorest and most degraded communicated freely with the leaders of the movement, as they were brought into contact with them by working men, who were known to them, and could converse with them without suspicion or distrust.

I myself visited the worst parts of Glasgow—the "Goose Dubbs," the "New Vennel," and certain parts of the wynds in the "High Street" close to the college. When I undertook this visitation, I was prepared to see much that would shock and distress me, but I had no conception of the actual state of things. To write a description of all that I saw would be impossible. The dirt, the rags, the squalor, the evidences of hunger, the expression of hopelessness on the faces of the women, the appearance of the children, and the horror of the whole thing as the condition of life for multi-

tudes of people generation after generation, shocked the heart and almost paralysed the understanding. I was compelled to abandon the exploration on which I had entered. Nerves of steel would have been required to carry such a task through to the end, and I had not got them. What I did see, however, filled me with determination to go forward with the work I had commenced, and it was in this way, by investigations into the facts of life, that we met those who opposed us. Our weapons were not forged out of anger, springing from the unjust attacks of our opponents, but from a sympathy with poor human victims of neglect, whose sufferings and vices had come to be regarded by the community as necessary concomitants of a progressive civilisation.

In addition to the Bishop of Exeter and his prompter, Mr. Brindley, there were four of less note in the field against Robert Owen, namely Joseph Barker, John Easby, a person named Hawthorne, and another named Pallister. Joseph Barker possessed considerable cleverness, but the other three had little or no skill in argument. They could repeat misrepresentations, and in this way sometimes caused the discharge of a few men from their employment, and on two or three occasions excited the mob to violence; but beyond this their opposition was serviceable to the movement rather than otherwise. These persons played on the prejudices of people, many of whom, among the working classes, were ignorant and easily excited, but there were large numbers who knew that however much we might disagree with them on certain points, we were their active and zealous friends on all political and social questions in which they took an interest.

The progress made in spreading the principles advocated by the Socialists was rapid during this time. Large halls for holding public meetings were erected in the various towns in the manufacturing districts. In Manchester, a hall was built, which was afterwards purchased and opened as the free library of that town. These halls were used for lectures, classes, social gatherings, and discussions on all important public questions. It is doubtful if there was ever a period during which, in connection with the manufacturing population of the country, there existed so much activity in the direction of earnest inquiry; and the importance of a training such as this for working men can, I think, scarcely be over-estimated in a country the progress of which depends so much on an enlightened public opinion.

CHAPTER XI.

Riots at Burslem and Bristol.

THE crusade against Robert Owen and the Socialists was, at certain places, becoming dangerously active, in consequence of the anger excited by those for whom the Bishop of Exeter was acting in the House of Lords. The people generally, even though they could not be regarded as encouraging the agitation, did not actively oppose it. Nor did the Government oppose it. The proceedings of the Socialists were carried on within doors, they made no offensive public demonstrations, nor did they do anything to arouse public anger. Still, during the years from 1838 to 1842, an opposition was organised for the purpose of hunting down, by public clamour, persons, who in the promulgation of their principles, refused to be intimidated by men incited to activity by ignorance and prejudice. Mr. Brindley was the principal instrument in this work, and whether to his credit or discredit, it is right to say that no one could have laboured with more zeal. It was he who instructed the Bishop of Exeter. What the bishop uttered in the House of Lords gave the cue to the press, and between him and the newspapers, most extraordinary conceptions of Robert Owen and his plans took possession of the minds of large numbers of people,

who became warm in their antagonism, without taking much trouble to ascertain whether or not they were justified in what they were doing.

Mr. Brindley went up and down the kingdom, and wherever he went, by placards and meetings, he managed to inflame the minds of the violent, the bigoted, and the ignorant. In the June of 1840, he visited the Staffordshire Potteries. The patronage of some few of the bishops, and a considerable number of the clergy of the Established Church, together with an adverse address by the Wesleyan Congress to the people of that denomination, caused many of the employers to give open support to Mr. Brindley, not only by subscribing to defray the expense of his efforts, but by dismissing from their employment persons known to be friends and adherents of Owen. Mr. Brindley's success in the Potteries was very considerable ; public buildings were engaged for him, in which he delivered exciting addresses, and the tickets of admission to such meetings were bought by the employers, and distributed among the people who worked for them. Arrangements were made for a discussion in the National Schoolroom at Burslem, between Mr. Brindley and Mr. Robert Buchanan, but without consulting Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Brindley and his supporters changed the place of meeting to the covered market, and took the precaution to have it well filled with their friends before the other side was aware. In fact, so violent and unscrupulous were their proceedings, and so great the number of people who suffered through being thrown out of employment, that it was considered best to act quietly, though firmly, until the worst of the storm

had blown over. The years 1838 and 1839 were years of great depression in trade, during which the working people suffered much, whilst 1840 was a year of slow recovery, and as the pressure of bad times on the workers was becoming gradually relieved by increase of employment, it was decided not to do anything that could be avoided through which suffering might be brought on struggling men who were at the mercy of those disposed to act at the instigation of Mr. Brindley and his friends. During this time arrangements had been made for a course of lectures to be delivered by Robert Owen, at different towns, and the principal public halls were engaged. In each case the agreement was violated, and the halls refused. In addition to this, the following placard, without signature or printer's name, was extensively posted. "Owen again! at Dalehall. Mr. Owen, after being driven out of Newcastle and Stoke, is coming here to-night, at six o'clock, to propagate his blasphemous principles. Will you have him after Friday night's exposure? If not, assemble before the meeting, in a peaceable and orderly manner, and respectfully, but firmly and decidedly, declare that this poison shall no more be retailed among you." That this peaceful and orderly assembly might not be deficient in the element needed, drums and fifes were sent through the town in various directions, and a crowd of several thousands of the roughest portion of the inhabitants was collected, while a platform was erected for the purpose of holding an opposition meeting exactly opposite the institution where the meeting of Robert Owen was about to take place. The playing of music and

the processions through the town led to much drinking, the liquors being, for the most part, supplied free of cost. Addresses of a most violent kind were delivered from the platform, and everything was in a state of preparation. Mr. Owen arrived a few minutes before seven o'clock, in a gig, accompanied by a young friend from Stoke; but before he could alight, an effort was made to upset the gig, for the purpose of inflicting personal injury. To prevent this, his friends went to his assistance—he was at this time seventy years of age—and got him safely out of the gig, though several were savagely beaten while doing so—one young man having his jaw bone broken. The police, being, no doubt, previously instructed, looked calmly on. The mob, being overwhelming, forced Mr. Owen through the streets to the house of a man who was one of his most active enemies, where he had to remain for two hours the object of gross insult. At the end of this time Mr. Williams, a friendly solicitor, arrived to take him home with him, but the moment Owen appeared he was assailed with stones and mud, from which he had to again take shelter. After a time, however, he got safely off to the neighbouring town where he was staying.

Mr. Alexander Campbell, the social missionary who attended Mr. Owen, not knowing what had become of him, was making his way through the mob in search of him, but found that he had got off. Mrs. Williams, the wife of the solicitor above referred to, was with Mr. Campbell anxiously looking for Owen, who was her guest. As soon as they discovered that he had escaped they began making their way back, but Mr. Campbell was recognised. He was at once separ-

ated from the lady who accompanied him, and severely beaten. In his efforts to escape, he had to pass over a field and a canal bridge, and here an attempt was made to throw him into the canal; he escaped, however, and took refuge in a house where he had to remain for several hours.

The persons who had assembled in the hall to hear the address fared no better. The account published at the time says that when it became known that Mr. Owen was forcibly prevented from lecturing, the audience was dismissed; but on leaving the institution they were most inhumanly treated, their clothes being torn, and, in some instances, the hair pulled from their heads. Those who organized the meeting remained behind, and were at once besieged. An attempt was made to force the door, which had been strongly barricaded. This failing, a room adjoining the lecture hall was taken possession of, and a breach made in the party wall. Here a fierce battle ensued, the attacking party being driven back. A double attempt to enter was then made—one from the cellars, and another from the roof of the building. A clergyman and the head constable then put in an appearance, and tried to obtain a surrender, offering a free and save passage if the parties promised not to assemble again in their own hall. This offer was refused, and after some further parley it was agreed that they should be allowed to return home unmolested. It was then arranged that several women who were there, the wives of some of the party, should leave first, on the supposition that no attack would be made on women. The men, not being sure of this, followed close behind, and their suspicions were well founded.

One woman received a severe blow on the head, while the secretary of the institution had his head badly cut through his hat by a stone. They again took shelter in a private house, and here they had to remain till late into the night when the mob dispersed. No attempt was made to check these proceedings, and bands of music were allowed by the police to parade the town for the purpose of keeping up the excitement till late at night, and, although several persons were severely wounded, nobody was arrested. The press took the same approving view as that taken by the authorities. The *Staffordshire Gazette*, describing the treatment of Mr. Campbell, says :—" A large party of individuals pursued and overtook him, and proceeded to treat him without ceremony. They rolled their victim in the field, and afterwards anointed him with that more useful than agreeable material, clay, likewise subjecting him to that elegant process called 'bonneting.' Eventually he made his escape to the Britannia Inn, Navigation Road, and we apprehend that the worthy people of Longport will, after this spectacle, not be inclined rejoicingly to sing 'The Campbells are Coming.'" Such proceedings as these, however, are not to be considered as fairly exhibiting the spirit of the people towards the Socialists. Nothing approaching to riot or personal violence was indulged in by the people when left to themselves, but only where Mr. Brindley, or some person like him, in league with one or two clergymen of the fanatical sort, set themselves to work to excite them. Besides, this sort of opposition never spread. Where the irritation was provoked it occurred, and as soon as the incentive was withdrawn all became quiet again.

About six months after this, Mr. Brindley exerted himself to create in Congleton and Macclesfield the same spirit he had called into existence in the Potteries. He was so successful that large numbers of persons were discharged from their employment, and this method of dealing with the progress of Robert Owen's views was spreading so rapidly, that it produced quite a panic among all who had in any way expressed opinions favourable to them. Mr. Joseph Smith was sent to Congleton to neutralise the effect Brindley was producing, and when things were in this state I happened to arrive in Manchester on my way from Glasgow to London. A deputation from Macclesfield and Congleton waited on me, with a request that I would go among them, and help in the defence they were making. I at once started, and had Congleton placarded for two addresses. Mr. Brindley had possession of the Town Hall, and had meetings on the same night. Some half-dozen of the leading men of the town waited on me, and begged me to go to Mr. Brindley's meetings, and discuss the matters in dispute between us there. I at once refused, being determined not to be drawn from the line I had laid down for myself and announced to the public. My first meeting was crowded and most successful. Next morning an insolent placard was issued, for the purpose of forcing me into compliance with the wishes of Mr. Brindley and his supporters. It ran thus:—"Mr. Lloyd Jones—will you, dare you, meet Mr. Brindley to-night, no shuffling, no evasion; but a fair manly open discussion? Unless you are a downright coward, turn out. Unless you feel assured that Socialism is the foul abortion that it is, come and submit it

to a fair trial. Now all will be able to see who it is that is afraid the truth should prevail."

To this absurd bombast I replied by a refusal, given from the mouth of that ancient authority, the bellman, to depart from the programme already arranged. My meeting that night was densely crowded, the door having been fastened to prevent pressure. The men who had got Mr. Brindley's tickets from their employers to attend the meeting at the Town Hall came to my meeting, and left Mr. Brindley, the employers and clergy to comfort each other. In the middle of my address the door was forced open, and the mayor, several of the corporation, and other gentlemen of that class, rushed into the meeting, forced their way to the front of the platform, and put Mr. Brindley forward to commence a discussion. I had made my arrangements, and at once told Mr. Brindley that if he persisted in speaking he should be ejected. He did persist, and at a word from me two strong young men lifted him up, carried him to the door, and deposited him outside, his clerical and manufacturing friends following of themselves. This was very quietly done, and when they were fairly gone, the mayor got up to address the meeting. I asked him if he intended to speak as the mayor of the town or as a private person—if as the mayor, I promised a respectful hearing, but if as a private gentleman he should be put out as Mr. Brindley had been. He meant to speak, he declared, in a non-official capacity, but after what had been said, he would withdraw. He did so, and my meeting proceeded to the end in perfect order, and to the satisfaction of those assembled.

The next day I waited on the mayor at the court-

house, and talked matters over with him and his brother magistrates at a private interview, which ended in an understanding, at once carried out, that they would use all their influence to get the discharged men taken back by their employers. During the following week I held a three nights' discussion with Brindley, in the large schoolroom at Macclesfield—the vicar, Mr. Burnett, in the chair. I fully explained our principles and objects, exposed the falsehoods so industriously circulated, and established a peace that was not afterwards disturbed.

While these things were taking place in Congleton and Macclesfield, a legal crusade was being carried on in Manchester, to compel the taking of the dissenting ministers' oath by the social missionaries. There were some law proceedings, and finally Mr. Buchanan took the oath. At Bristol, some few months after, being summoned before the magistrates to do the same, I did it without a moment's hesitation. This proceeding has been declared as having caused a revolt in the society. This is not the fact, inasmuch that in the movement led by Robert Owen no man was questioned as to his religious belief, so no man was controlled as to his willingness or unwillingness to be sworn. It was never made a subject of discussion in the society, as in such matters every man was left to do what appeared right in his own eyes. Our halls were, as a rule, licensed as places of worship, and a license was necessary to make speaking in them lawful, should it be demanded. The demand in two or three cases was made, as an obstacle to our proceedings. It failed, and there the matter ended, without causing disturbance, discussion, or division of any kind.

The Bristol riots were the most serious that took place in connection with the public teaching of Robert Owen. Like those of Burslem, they were designedly and wantonly produced, but the danger attending them while they lasted never extended beyond the spot on which they occurred. There was no extensive and powerful organisation behind them. Mr. Brindley, as the agent of certain parties who subscribed to pay his expenses, appeared at certain points at certain times, and from the moment he made his appearance to the time he took his departure, there was excitement and sometimes riot ; but when he withdrew everything became quiet.

About six months after the Burslem attack, Owen visited Bristol, his friends there having taken and fitted up a large hall in Broadmead. He was to address the public on the occasion of its opening. Mr. Brindley got to the town before him, and by the time he arrived, had stirred up a very strong feeling against him by resorting to his usual system of false representation. Owen's books were publicly burned, and a serious attack was made on his life. As he was entering a cab to drive to his hotel, it was suddenly seized by the wheels, and on the point of being overturned, when he was dragged from it by his friends, and surrounded by a party of resolute men, who kept the mob off by sheer fighting. In an entry into which his friends pushed him, at the same time firmly guarding the entrance, some sort of disguise was adopted, and by the friendliness of one of the residents, he was led through a back passage, and in that way got to his inn without suffering injury.

News of the danger to which he had been exposed

arrived next day in London, and I started at once, travelling all night, so as to be with him as soon as possible. At that time (the January of 1841), the railway only went as far as Reading, and from there the coach continued the journey to Bristol. It was a hard winter, and the night was bitterly cold, so that when I got to Bristol in the morning, I was by no means in a comfortable condition. I found that Owen's friends, being convinced that his life was in danger, had begged of him to return at once to London by the early coach. After much pressing he complied, and I must have passed him as he was leaving the town. The condition of things was not very cheering. The large hall in Broadmead, which had been newly fitted up, was in a state of utter wreck. The seats were all broken, the rostrum torn down, the gas fittings demolished, the doors and windows smashed, and all that could be done in the way of destruction fully accomplished. This had taken place on the previous evening, so that between the wrecked building and the excited state of public feeling, I felt that however my visit might end, its beginning was not of the most propitious kind. I went that night to a meeting of Mr. Brindley's, held at a large circus in the town, and on the following night held my first meeting, the hall in Broadmead having been hurriedly fitted up again by a crowd of young volunteer workmen. Somewhere about three thousand persons were packed into the building, while outside the crowd was dense and excited. No discussion was allowed until I had said all I intended to say, and though Mr. Brindley and his friends did all they could to throw the meeting into disorder, it

finished peaceably, and with good effect in allaying prejudice.

When I got into the street to return home, I was surrounded by a furious mob, that yelled at me and made other angry manifestations. In a short time stones began to fly, several of our party, including myself, being struck. We took refuge in a public-house, and barricaded the doors and windows on the ground floor. The police, hearing of the riot, soon arrived, and we escaped, under their protection, at the back of the premises; and, though we were discovered and the mob signalled to, we managed to get a cab and drive off too rapidly to be overtaken. The police acted very well. While one of them jumped on the box-seat to direct the driver, the others faced round and kept back the advancing crowd.

The next night I lectured again, and everything went off quietly inside the building. The mob outside was, however, more numerous than on the previous night. There was no way of getting out at the back of the building, as the premises in that direction abutted on a river, and had neither door nor windows, nor was there any means of egress at the sides, while in front a long passage built in on each side made it necessary to pass out right into the midst of the mob. The constables, who had been sent into the meeting, arranged that they would walk at some little distance before and behind me, while about twenty young men were placed around me. In this order we moved right into the crowd and along the road leading out of the city toward the place where I was staying.

The struggle began the moment we left the hall, and for about a mile it was carried on fiercely.

Sometimes by a determined pressure of the crowd we were forced back; then again we were forced to the right or left, as the opening of a street gave opportunity. It was quite clear the mob was under the control of certain leaders, as their object the whole time seemed to be to separate me from those who were protecting me, and deal with me singly. The police saw that the situation was becoming very dangerous, and instead of advancing straight to where I had taken up my quarters, they turned suddenly into a police station, close to the street we were in, and as soon as they entered fastened the doors. Reinforcements arrived, the portion of the mob nearest the building was driven back, and for the moment I was safe. A rumour that I had been killed by the mob got circulated, and several persons of respectable position in the city came to the police office, and when they found that I was safe, offered me refuge in their houses; but I declined, and having changed my overcoat and slightly disguised myself, I left by a back door, and, passing through two divisions of the mob which were on the look-out for me, reached home in safety.

The morning after, as I sat at breakfast, a man called and inquired for me, and when he was shown into the room, where I sat alone, he looked at me and said, "I am glad you are safe." I asked him his business, and he told me that he was appointed to attend all my meetings, and report to the Government; that this was his business in Bristol, and that he was most anxious I should not get into trouble. He had, he said, to report what I said, and if I at any time talked wildly, harm would come of it. "I do

not think you will," he said, "but as I entirely believe in the work you are doing, I am anxious you should continue it without injury to yourself." Having thus delivered himself, he bid me "Good-morning," and hurried out of the room. After he was gone, it struck me that there was on his face, as he spoke, a painful look of self-accusation, and I have from that moment entertained a kindly remembrance of the man who, being placed in such a position, could perform such an act. Nothing very particular occurred after this, beyond an attempt at assault one night when I was alone, but as I carried a good stick, I had no difficulty in getting rid of my assailants. I remained in Bristol for some weeks, but was never again in similar danger.

After this Mr. Brindley tried his fortune in London, where I, through my friends, arranged for a debate in the theatre of the Coliseum, Regent's Park, which attracted a good deal of attention, and did much in bringing Robert Owen's views under discussion with the general public. There was no disturbance of any kind, and everything went off satisfactorily. Then Mr. Brindley made his appearance at Birmingham, to which town I followed him, Robert Owen going with me. At Birmingham, as well as in London, the verdict of the public, taken by resolution, was overwhelmingly with us. It became apparent that what was meant to crush us was rapidly giving us strength, hence in a short time Mr. Brindley ceased to trouble the public as an active and noisy opponent of Socialism, and after some small tribute to him, got up chiefly by the clergy, he disappeared so far as we were concerned, and was no more heard of. An attempt was made in the early part of 1840 to burn the

Manchester Institution, and there occurred some minor attempts at assault in different parts of the country, but beyond this there is nothing to record of any consequence as violent interference with the proceedings of the Socialists.

The impression made on the mind of Robert Owen, and on the minds of those who joined with him in this agitation, which extended fully over ten years, was that a fairer, more tolerant, and well-disposed audience cannot be got together, than one composed of the average run of the working class in the manufacturing districts of Great Britain. Had Owen and his followers not been grossly misrepresented, and the doctrines they taught designedly misinterpreted by men whose object it was to excite the worst prejudices in a class below that of our ordinary working people, it is fair to surmise that no disturbance would have taken place. Having had a special experience in connection with excited crowds at public meetings, I may say that where a hearing was granted, I never knew sound argument fail in producing a satisfactory result. There is, no doubt, much unfairness in sectarian contentions, in contentions where money interests are at stake, and when the conflicts of party politics become hot. In such cases there are fixed, foregone conclusions, and heat and violence too frequently take the place of argument; but away from such questions and the excitement they beget, it may be asserted that there is in Great Britain as clear a "stage" and as little "favour" as men of the world desirous of preserving the amenities of debate need wish for.

In passing on to the effort to establish an industrial

community, it must be borne in mind that from the commencement of the agitation, its promoters had two objects in view. There was, as it were, a society within a society, each society having its own duties and objects, though at all times in strict agreement one with the other. The larger section may be described as purely propagandist. Its object was to make known to the general public the principles of Robert Owen in regard to the formation of character, and the necessity of education as a check to vice and crime. In addition it exposed existing evils in connection with the industrial system of the country, and urged the necessity for practical effort with the view of bringing the worker into better relation with his work, that poverty and misery might cease to be the general and almost constant attendants on labour.

The expenses necessary for carrying on the agitation were paid by weekly subscriptions imposed on the people by themselves, and there was no responsibility incurred beyond this, as, while education was insisted on as a national duty, and improvement in the condition of the people urged as a matter of supreme necessity, nobody was pledged to any special effort for the purpose of realising either of these objects. The great aim was the extension of a belief in the truth of certain principles and a faith in their practicability. In fact, the propagandism carried on was simply a preparation of the ground with a view to practical action, and as there was nothing to rely on but public opinion, and the support to be derived from it, the efforts of Owen and his friends were to create such public belief in their ideas as might lead to these ideas being acted upon.

This society was called, very ambitiously, the "Association of all Classes of all Nations," but this was not so much in the expectation that it had any chance of becoming what such a title implied, as to express the fact that it was open to all, without any kind of exclusion on grounds of country, class, or creed.

Inside the larger society, and worked by an organisation of its own, was the "Community Friendly Society," which had for its object the promotion of practical effort. It enrolled members who desired to see a model village for industrial and educational purposes established, and who were willing to subscribe for such a purpose. Its members were not so numerous as those of the propagandist association, but they paid a much larger and a separate sum as a weekly subscription. In the one case a penny per week was found sufficient to carry forward the general work, while the members of the "Community Friendly Society" paid one shilling a week each in addition. This society was recruited from the other, but those not subscribing for community purposes could not interfere with the conduct of its business, nor could they be elected as inmates to any establishment that might be set on foot. During the whole of the agitation described in previous chapters, the "Community Friendly Society" was going quietly on with its own special work. It gathered in adherents, collected subscriptions, discussed projects and plans, kept in view offers for the sale or letting of lands, such as might suit the purpose it had in view, and considered how best to proportion trade, education, and agriculture, so as to promote the success of the projected undertaking.

CHAPTER XII.

Practical Operations.

At the annual Congress of 1840, the Central Board made the following report to the society in relation to practical operations on the land.

"Since the last annual session of Congress, the estate, situate at East Tytherly, in the county of Hants, has been secured by the directors on a lease of ninety-nine years; and it is now vested in trustees on behalf of the society, and preparatory steps for the establishment of a community have been taken to the extent that the collected funds of the society admit. The estate consists, as stated in page 140 of the report of last Congress, of two farms, one of 301 acres, named Queenwood, which is tithe free; the other of 232 acres, which is extra-parochial, named Buckholt. The annual rent is £350, having been fined down from £375, by payment of £750; and the society have power further to fine down the rent to £300, £250, and £200, on making three successive payments of £1,500 each. Possession of this property was obtained on Tuesday, the first day of October, 1839, when the directors paid the sum of £1,694 for the stock upon the farms, it having been valued, according to the custom of the country, at that sum."

This was an important step. A great deal had

been done in propagandism as a preparation for it, but over the whole time, there had been much difference of opinion as to the policy to be pursued in practically working out the society's plans. There was always a party in the society that professed not to believe in talking, and who grumbled at lectures, discussions, or public meetings of any kind that did not directly insist on practical work on the land. They saw no disadvantage in an inadequate public support, and not much in a deficiency of funds, or even in a lack of agreement as to necessary preliminaries. On the other hand, there was a very strong party who were thoroughly convinced as to the necessity of continued and extended propagandist effort. Excellent results were becoming daily manifest from the teaching that was carried on. Large numbers of people were joining the movement, in the manufacturing districts more particularly; and not only were these, as members of the association, giving life and progress to the agitation, but the general public, notwithstanding the opposition of Mr. Brindley and his supporters, was rapidly coming to understand that although our proceedings stirred up religious disputations, the main, in fact, the only object of our association was to promote education, and to improve the condition of the working people of the country, without disturbing order, or in any way attacking property.

Our missionaries were, for the most part, young, active, and zealous men, who acted by direction of the central authority; while the district lecturers operated locally for the branches by which they were engaged, and, hence, there was a constant, properly

supervised system of teaching going forward in thorough sympathy with the people. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that if ten additional years had been given to this kind of work, a mass of public opinion would have been prepared, by which the inertia that was allowing things to go their own way in the direction of ignorance, vice, and misery, would have been effectively antagonised. It was an old dispute that cropped up among the social reformers, just as it had done in past days in all sorts of movements, and as it will in future, whenever men have to act together for common ends. The tendency of persons who cannot talk will always be to believe that they can work, and in this belief to do much mischief by attempting to act without the necessary conditions of success; while the tendency of eloquent propagandists will be to avoid such practical experiments as they think unlikely to bring the desired results. There is, no doubt, a true point of action between the two; but, like many true points, it will be difficult to hit. On the other hand, where contention is strong, it will be easy to miss, and in this instance there can be no doubt that it was missed.

Robert Owen himself stood stoutly out against premature action, and up to the last moment he insisted that that which was contemplated was too hurried. At this time, however, there were outside causes operating to produce premature activity. A small landed proprietor had declared himself a convert to the principles, and a believer in the plans of the Socialists. He was a man of good address and some ability, and he took advantage of the organisation to go from place to place, address meetings, and

make offers to such as were disposed to join him. There was also a man of the same sort in Wales, who had land to experiment on, and who was anxious to set up a colony. A third experiment of a different kind was also in preparation. Rightly or wrongly, these things influenced Owen's movement, and helped to throw obstacles in its way, as both the men above alluded to got money and labour invested in their land, without giving any security for either, and, in the end, kept possession of what they had obtained. These did not start before the society, but their preparations hurried forward its project.

Owen at first declared he would withdraw himself from the movement, but as this would have amounted to a breaking up of the whole thing, he reluctantly consented to continue, though under very distinct protest against the policy of rashness that had been adopted, and with an understanding that nothing of importance should be done without his knowledge and consent. Upon this understanding he was appointed governor on condition that he should hold office nominally until, at the following Congress, the whole matter should be fully discussed. It will be seen from what is stated here, that the acquisition of an estate was not regarded by many people connected with the movement as an unmixed good. The initial difficulties ought to have prevented the step taken. The capital in hand was utterly inadequate to the carrying through of such an undertaking. A good deal was promised, and much of this was forthcoming when wanted, but a certain outlay, that had to be made, and could not be postponed, was not adequately provided for by a contingent and uncertain income.

There were no buildings on the estate beyond an old farmhouse and some ordinary farm buildings, in consequence of which the foremost requisite of the new colony consisted in accommodation for the first batch of residents. Three gentlemen were appointed as deputy governor, agricultural manager, and resident trustee, to direct and manage the undertaking. A good-sized brick building was first erected, which was intended to subsequently serve for a school. The upper floor was divided into apartments for the first people who arrived, the ground floor being used for giving lessons to the children already there, and as a dining-room.

The land was not good and did not promise average crops, but, by proper treatment, in a season or two it yielded very satisfactory returns. Large garden grounds for the use of the people were laid out, and an abundance of the best vegetables planted and grown. Good gardeners who were members of the society were sent to the estate, together with a number of skilled artisans. The stock on the farm was increased, and a larger breadth of land manured and sown than many of the neighbouring farmers thought prudent, but it turned out well, and on this head no difficulty arose.

In a few months there was quite a little colony settled on the land, but as the members of the society had been sent from the manufacturing districts, and were skilled workmen, their labour was employed in skilled work, while the agricultural labourers of the neighbourhood, instead of being superseded, found themselves fully employed, and on better conditions as to wages and general treatment. "Queenwood,"

though in its situation and surroundings already a beautiful place, gradually began, in the hands of the industrious people who had been sent there, to assume an improved appearance. Those who were set to work out the experiment were sober, industrious, intelligent men, who had been led to study the conditions of society as they found it in their own experience; who had revolted against the painful lives led by the working people, and who determined to make an experiment with a view to elevate and improve them. The difficulties which had to be encountered did not detract from the merit of the attempt, as these difficulties were nearly altogether of a pecuniary kind, such as often defeat the best understood and most ordinary business. The land had to be properly cultivated; buildings to be erected suitable for residence, and for carrying out efficiently the several objects in view. One of the first of these objects was to establish a good school in which to educate the children of the people resident on the estate, and also the children of such as could afford to pay a charge to cover the cost of good plain living, and teaching; and, at the same time, leave something towards defraying the expenses of the establishment.

As a principal source of income, the intention was to draft workers in various skilled trades to the estate, whose labour did not require extensive and costly machinery; and the produce of whose industry might be disposed of to the general public and to the various branches of the society. The difficulties attending such an undertaking were never overlooked. From the first it was felt that unless

sufficient funds were supplied from the outside, it could never be successful. The sums supplied were not sufficient. Active operations were scarcely commenced, when it was discovered that the money at command was scarcely enough to stock and work the farm, and that if the experiment had to rely on the support of the society, it would collapse before the plan could be tested on its merits. This was no time to bandy accusations; the impatient practical men were rapidly discovering that impatience is the least practical thing connected with human affairs, and that "raw haste" is not only "half-sister to delay," but is also the mother of endless disappointments and failures.

Mr. John Finch, of Liverpool, who was appointed deputy governor, was a very excellent man, full of honesty of purpose and good intention; but rather deficient in insight and tact. He was kindly in spirit, and prepared to do all in his power for the comfort and welfare of the people with whom he had to deal. He had, however, a half joking way of saying unpleasant things which made him rather unpopular, and though the differences that occurred between the people and the deputy-governor, seldom involved anything which was not referable to faults of temper on one side or the other, they constituted an unfitness that rendered Mr. Finch's withdrawal desirable. A severe illness rendered it necessary to Mr. Finch himself, and it therefore took place without any unpleasantness. Mr. Heaton Aldam, who managed the farming department, was an able and pleasant man; but he undertook his duties without calculating the difficulties of his new position. On his

own farm he was master, possessed ample resources, and ordered what had to be done in the certainty that it could be done, without demur or objection. He was out of place, therefore, where consultation was occasionally necessary, and where "ways and means" required to be discussed. Charles Frederick Green, the resident trustee, in a few months was called away, and settled in America. His practical training and general usefulness would have made his help of value, but he had to leave, and thus the management had to be re-arranged, with an improved knowledge of the requirements of the new colony. The three gentlemen named did not over-weight the establishment with expense, as they gave their services without charge of any kind beyond their board; but as mere depositaries of authority, the work to be done did not need them. There was over-much of management, and, as there was not always agreement, this was felt to be an evil.

At the Congress of 1841, held in Manchester, the difficulties at Queenwood began to be apparent, and though they were not at that time very formidable, it was evident that unless the financial resources of the society could be developed they would rapidly become greater. There existed in the community pressing need for an increase of members to carry on operations that could not be postponed without loss. There was also a desire in the branches throughout the country to send additional residents, that the business of the establishment might be carried actively forward. But as the sending of each additional person involved a permanent increase in expenditure, it was felt by the more cautious that the pursuit of such a

policy would be ruinous, unless at the same time provision could be made to permanently enlarge the income of the society. There was no branch of industry on the estate that could bring any immediate return, and, therefore, whatever might be necessary for carrying on farming and building operations, as well as what was needed for the support of residents, had to be found by the non-resident members of the association.

Up to that time loans could not be resorted to, if for no other reason, because among the members generally, lenders of considerable amounts could not be found. There were people in connection with the society who could lend, but they were not likely to do so while the members in the various branches had the power (by hurrying forward operations so as to overweight the establishment) to render the capital invested unprofitable. These persons, as matters stood during the early stages of the attempt, showed no disposition to come forward. Many ways were suggested of encouraging small investors by making the money they advanced available in certain forms that might meet their requirements. It was proposed that a certain portion of the money so advanced should be at call, while another portion should be subject to conditions of deferred payment. As many of those who subscribed funds never meant to reside at Queenwood, a system of mutual insurance was proposed, from which, at a certain time of life, annual payments were to be made. There were other suggestions, but obviously such plans were useless without some guarantee for success and profitable working, and this was precisely what such an experiment could not offer.

If money was to be forthcoming, it was quite clear that those able and willing to lend must be consulted, and, as far as possible, their views adopted. Matters could not remain as they were in the early part of 1841, except at the risk of an immediate failure, and there were many who would have very much regretted such a result. Several of these were willing to advance money, but they were not disposed to do so without stipulating that they should in a certain way control its expenditure. Naturally, their first desire was to prevent the society, acting through its branches, from sending residents at will. For this purpose they formed themselves into a society called the "Home Colonisation Society," and by contributions, principally taking the form of loans, got together large sums of money, and, as afterwards became known, received promises of other large sums, which were not kept when the money was required. Practically, the "Home Colonisation Society" superseded the old society, by causing such alterations to be made in its constitution as reduced it to a subordinate position, in which it became a follower and helper with little or no power of initiation in anything that required the spending of money, or that involved the safety of what was, or what might be, invested.

The changes thus brought about, though many of them were necessary, all of them well-meant and made with the assent of the members of the society, had a deadening effect on the spirit of the most active and zealous. Enthusiasm was not needed, and, as a natural consequence, it began to disappear. Such variations were made in the laws as caused the will of the president and governor to be paramount in almost

everything connected with business. Robert Owen combined both offices in his own person, and as he had the common weakness of regarding those who agreed with him as the fittest to be trusted in the carrying out of his views, the soundness of judgment arising from a comparison of ideas was hardly to be expected, and, in many instances, was not to be found.

Another important result of the proceedings referred to, was the breaking up of the organised system of propagandism that had been at work from the beginning. There were seven district missionaries, whose salaries, it was thought, would be better spent in assisting practical operations on the land, and within a year after the new system was brought into operation, their services were dispensed with. Most of them had rendered unpaid service, before they had imposed on them the duties of missionaries, and after their services in this capacity were no longer called for, they passed into the ranks, and again took on themselves their share of the volunteer work necessary for carrying on the operations of the society. Another effect of this new policy was to diminish the value of the halls which had been erected in several of the large towns. Up to this time, these had been managed in the interest of the movement, and though not profitable as money speculations, they served the purpose the shareholders had in view, being well employed in the improvement of the people who attended them for instruction and amusement. When the members of these institutions slackened in their zeal, in consequence of the pure business action of the new management, attendance fell off; and other means of

using the halls had to be resorted to for the purpose of preventing a serious loss.

At this time trade was so bad that the working people were suffering greatly, and although those who had joined Robert Owen's movement were not of the poorest—were, indeed, as a rule, the most provident—yet in times of bad trade all suffer, though naturally the improvident have to endure most. Whatever the cause, the attendance at the various institutions slackened, and the enthusiasm the people felt when they themselves were the directors of their own experiment, subsided to a considerable extent, leaving the management nearly altogether in the hands of those who, as a Home Colonisation Society, had taken on themselves the duty of furnishing the chief portion of the funds.

The Congress of 1841 was held in Manchester at the time when this change was being carried out. The reports of the various delegates were encouraging; but several of them pointed out that the building of halls in many localities had so absorbed the means of members, that they were unable to subscribe as largely as they had previously done for aiding experiments on the land. They were as much alive as ever to the importance of pushing forward social reform; but it was difficult to raise money among people suffering through want of employment, and this fact furnished an additional reason why such resources as could be commanded should be more exclusively applied to operations on the land, seeing that these had been commenced, and could not be brought to a standstill.

The Manchester Congress was marked by a spirit

of cheerful confidence, and it may be added that at these Congresses the business was conducted without any view to outside effect. Such a thing would have been very difficult had there been any disposition to attempt it. The "family meetings," as they were called, which were regularly held in all the branches, kept the members thoroughly acquainted with the minutest details of their business, in consequence of which the delegates, who were as a rule active and intelligent men, came to the annual consideration of their affairs with minds so informed in regard to the subjects with which they had to deal, that any attempt to impose on them, or on the public through them, would, had it been contemplated, have been impracticable. Outside, matters were progressing as well as could be expected, and if nothing had required attention beyond the influencing of public opinion, the prospects of the movement at the time of the Congress of 1841, would have left little to be desired. The lecturing was carried on with great activity. Eighteen missionaries and paid lecturers were constantly at work. In addition there were discussion classes in all directions, and a tract distribution so active that it was declared publicly at a meeting in Birmingham, of the Auxiliary Church of England Tract Society, that the Socialists had distributed more tracts in that town in a week than the Church party had circulated in a year.

Notwithstanding this, many were already apprehending trouble from the experiment on the land. Future progress, even in regard to propagandism, depended very much on its success, and it was every day becoming more clear that an experiment entered

on so hurriedly, would be a cause of much danger, and, unless saved by some fortunate set of circumstances, likely enough to end in disastrous failure. At the Manchester Congress, Mr. James Rigby, who had been appointed deputy governor, reported as to the then condition of the estate; and though his report was hopeful, it gave hints of disagreements and difficulties that, even though they might be overcome, were not encouraging. The inmates were dissatisfied, and they were written to, and asked to state frankly the causes of their dissatisfaction. In reply, they complained of the head farmer acting without proper control, and rendering his accounts irregularly. When asked their opinion of the new deputy governor, Mr. Rigby, they expressed approval of his kindness, and the general character of his policy, but more than hinted a want of faith in his infallibility. To a query as to the domestic arrangements, they complained that their bedrooms were too small and had no fireplaces, so that during the winter months they had to be too much together in the common sitting-room. This, however, was but a temporary inconvenience, as the building they were in was not intended for their dwelling, and was only to be occupied while better buildings were being erected. They complained also that the cooking accommodation was defective, being simply what had been used in the old farmhouse, but of their food, which was the most important item, they had no complaint to make, as it consisted of a good variety of dishes, and was as a rule well-served. Neither had they much complaint to make on the score of their clothing, though they could have done with more; they declared, however, that they did not

desire to press any claim that would interfere with the necessary expenditure in seed and manure for the land. Indeed, all were disposed to do the best they could, for the purpose of overcoming the difficulties consequent upon the hurried commencement of a scheme which, before it was entered on, required careful and ample preparation. From the reports given in, it appeared that they had been working hard, and that everything connected with the land was in a thriving condition. The account given by the deputy governor of the manner in which they conducted and employed themselves during the week and on Sundays, was interesting, and as it touched slightly on the Sabbath question it may be repeated in his own words. "On Sundays no more cooking is performed than cannot possibly be avoided, as on Saturday this operation is done for both Saturday and Sunday, so that Sunday may be as much as possible a day of rest. Our people never hurt the religious feelings of their neighbours by not paying all the attention they are able in this respect, and the feelings of their neighbours have altered much in their favour." Indeed, Mr. Rigby himself had been proposed as churchwarden, and would have accepted the position had his residence in the parish been long enough to qualify him.

On a week day, "they rose at six o'clock, and went out to work before breakfast till eight or half-past. For breakfast there was milk, cocoa, bread and butter, salad, &c. They then pursued their labours until dinner-time. Dinner was served up in a good style, and generally consisted of puddings, bacon, beef, mutton, vegetables, with hare and rabbit occasionally,

and an hour was allowed for the meal. At five all came in from work, and having dressed and partaken of tea, either joined in some amusement or attended to study."

In many respects the life at Queenwood was better than that of ordinary workers outside, and in some respects it was not so good. Had it included a sense of security, there can be no doubt it would have been greatly superior to the life led by our artizans in the large towns of the kingdom. As it was, there was a great desire to get there ; but the change from a crowded bustling town, to a neighbourhood which was comparatively a solitude, was trying to men whose previous habits had tended to unfit them for such a life. Upon the whole, however, the people there suited each other, and so far as agreement in association went, there was very little to complain of. Watch making and printing were introduced at an early stage of the experiment. In printing there was a good deal to be done in the society ; and the weekly journal, which was a large sixteen-paged paper, furnished, together with tracts and pamphlets, a fair start. But in every step taken there were many difficulties, every one of which, however, could have been overcome had there been ampler means at the disposal of the managing body.

CHAPTER XIII.

Change of Policy.

It will be seen that what may be regarded as a fatal error was committed in commencing operations on the land before obtaining possession of the funds necessary to carry them out. Such changes as resulted from a better knowledge, and a wider experience, might have been useful; but changes made under the pressure of necessity, were likely to be mischievous, as they were almost sure to touch, at some point, the convenience or comfort of those concerned, and by so doing to beget differences of opinion and mutual opposition. In this way the passing of the authority, that had up to this time belonged to the members of the association, into the hands of those who composed the "Home Colonisation Society," though it produced no positive dissatisfaction, furnished ground of complaint to a small minority. These indulged in unfriendly criticism, which led, for the first time, to the development of a party spirit, and occasioned disagreements which might have been avoided, if a more sober view of the situation and its necessities had continued to be taken.

During 1842 and the first half of 1843, building and farming operations were carried on very briskly.

Two farms, called the Great and Little Bently Farms, were added to the land already held, and were entered on under a long lease. The foundation stone of a very handsome structure, estimated to cost a large sum of money, had been laid, and building operations were commenced. The Home Colonisation Society having the controlling power in their hands, found funds to carry on these new operations, and, as the progress made was a source of much satisfaction, very little fault was found with what was being done, and no questions were pressed that those in power were indisposed to answer. In the branches, among the members, who belonged nearly altogether to the working classes, the buildings in course of erection were not approved of. They said that in themselves, and in the accommodation they offered, they were far beyond what working people were used to, or desired; and if instead of what appeared to them a palace, comfortable cottage houses were built, the expense would be less, and the comfort greater. On the other side, it was urged that although the expense per head might be more, the extra convenience would be such that, after a moderate period, the superior buildings would be found in many ways more economical; also that the habits of the residents would gradually alter. Expressions of dissatisfaction were also heard in the branches, among certain of the members, and might be considered as purely local. In the management there was no difference of opinion. The report of the central board to the Congress held in 1842, on the Queenwood estate, says:—

"You will have to witness during some days the

extent of these operations, whereby you will, no doubt, come to the conclusion that they must be entirely under the direction and superintendence of one controlling mind. It will become equally obvious that this mind must be enabled to comprehend the whole subject, or confusion will soon arise. And not only must the governor comprehend his plans, but he must be assisted in carrying them into effect, even to the minutest detail, by the best parties that can be selected, in whom he has confidence. This will be the great means of future success or failure. If dissension, even the most trifling, can arise as to how our objects are to be effected, the time has not come when they can be carried out. To the board it appears impossible—and they speak with considerable experience on the matter—that the slightest interruption can be permitted to the decision of the governor, and it will be for the Congress seriously to consider how far they coincide in this opinion, and to make their regulations accordingly. It will be requisite now, in the early stages of community arrangements, that all should clearly understand the terms on which they are admitted, and where the authority is vested."

The meaning of this cannot be mistaken. The governor's orders were not in any way to be disputed, and though this discipline of submission was meant honestly in the interest of those on whom it was imposed, it was nevertheless certain that the position of people dwelling in such an establishment might be made unbearable, should the governor lack either equity of spirit or soundness of judgment in regulating the affairs placed under his control. The

experiment was not altogether satisfactory. The personal disagreements and disputes were few, the people having lived together in peace and friendliness, but the blunders made in general management were sometimes serious, and might have been prevented if the right of free discussion had been more fully permitted.[1]

Much may be said in favour of so much authority as may be necessary to control factious opposition; but authority itself has a tendency to become factious, and to be in such circumstances more dangerous than opposition. The evils of arbitrary power, and those of factious resistance, when balanced, tend to create a belief that free discussion, with all its drawbacks, is very much to be preferred to an enforced silence that can neither approve nor condemn. For good or for evil the power the central board asked for was granted, and the proceedings in Hampshire went vigorously forward. A large amount of money was expended, much the greater part of which was furnished by the members of the central board themselves, in their character as representatives of the "Home Colonisation Society."

At the 1842 Congress, everything was done in regard to the estate in Hampshire without any approach to interference, either by the residents at Queenwood, or the members of the general society; yet though matters looked encouraging in May, when the regular yearly Congress met, three months after, the central board was compelled to call a special

[1] The writer was almost alone, amongst the leading members of the society, in opposition to this plan of management from the beginning.

Congress, for the purpose of considering the position of the society; the whole thing having been brought as nearly as possible to a standstill. It may be mentioned that the crisis which had then arrived, and with which the special Congress called in London in August 1842, had to deal, was not brought about by unreasonable, extravagant, or foolish conduct on the part of the people at Queenwood. The plans on which the place was conducted, the cost of carrying out these plans, and the means of defraying it, rested entirely with the central board, acting in conjunction with the "Home Colonisation Society."

It is more than likely that the colony in Hampshire would have come to a standstill if the society had been left to itself. The work undertaken, however economically conducted, was beyond the means at the disposal of the society. To erect buildings for farming, for schools, for workshops in various industries, and to find capital to carry on these industries, meant an enormous expenditure; and as every branch of business was, at its commencement, a mere experiment, though one might succeed, another might not, and it is plain that the probabilities were on the side of failure.

An outlay was incurred which, though perhaps not extravagant for the work which had to be executed, was quite out of proportion to the capital at command, or to any amount of capital that could be reasonably expected. Mr. Owen was at this time surrounded and assisted by men as sanguine as himself, who shared to the full his hopes and expectations. They were as disinterested and sincere as men could be, and did not expect from others more than they were themselves

prepared to do. Those who had capital advanced it liberally, but when they had gone as far as they could, those upon whose sympathy and assistance reliance had been placed, did not fulfil the expectations which had been entertained. When, therefore, the special Congress was called in August, 1842, the confession had to be made that there were not funds wherewith to meet the current expenses. Mr. William Galpin, General Secretary, a man of high honour and strict integrity, who possessed an amount of quiet determination that usually carried him over difficulties before which most men would have given way, explained the position with the utmost frankness. He said :—

" At the Congress held in May last, the proceedings of the president and the central board, for the past year, had given such general satisfaction that the confidence before reposed in them was carried to an extent greater, perhaps, than was ever previously placed in any officers of a public body. The position we then occupied, and the unanimity with which the various measures were passed, led me to believe that we should continue to progress, without any material check, to the accomplishment of all those great objects for which we are associated. This belief still exists to a great degree, but I must confess that I have felt most strongly the unsoundness of our position in being even momentarily deficient in the funds to meet our liabilities, inasmuch as all the arrangements were based on the understanding that such a deficiency should never exist, and I most fully determined on being a party to no other."

After a few more paragraphs, he added :—

"The temporary inconvenience now felt has been brought on by the operations being extended beyond the means advanced to carry them forward, and it will be for you to ascertain in what manner this has been done, and whether it is calculated to effect more permanent advantage to the cause we are engaged in than would have resulted from an adherence to the arrangements previously agreed on."

With regard to the expenditure that had been incurred it was, Mr. Galpin said, made by order of the governor; but though this might be true, it did not entirely excuse the men in conjunction with whom he acted. In truth, so far as miscalculation led to difficulties in this case, no one of those concerned was more to blame than the rest. They were all over-sanguine, and instead of checking each other by prudent calculation or business-like protest, they encouraged each other by mutual enthusiasm. This, though a serious error, was not fatal; and in proof of the good faith of the men who committed it, not one of them for an instant incurred suspicion in respect of anything that had been advised or executed. At this special Congress there was nothing called in question beyond the business ability of the men who had been appointed at the Congress of 1841, in accordance with the new system, and what the special Congress had to do was to appoint successors to the board, and decide on plans for future management. This was done without any kind of disagreement or personal unfriendliness between those concerned. There was much explanation and some sharp enough criticism, but at the close of the discussion a long resolution was passed unanimously declaring:—

"That this Congress, having heard the address of the governor of Harmony and explanations from members of the central board, and examined the accounts and liabilities of the society, Resolved,—That in the opinion of the Congress, the present financial condition of the establishment in Hampshire has mainly arisen from the too great confidence of the governor in the disposition of capitalists, not immediately connected with the society, to advance capital for its purposes when practical operations had been advanced to a certain stage, which confidence induced him to press forward practical operations in the said establishment at a rate which exceeded the actual income and available funds of the society. And the Congress further considers that this result has been aided by the implicit and unbounded faith reposed in the late governor by the principal officers of the society, which prevented them from exercising that judicious and prudent control over the expenditure of the funds which their uniform business-like and satisfactory conduct in other respects shows that, under other circumstances and but for such confidence, they would have felt it to be their duty to exercise. This Congress, however, after mature consideration, fully exonerates all the parties concerned from the imputation of any intentional error in policy or practice with reference to these operations, and declares its firm belief that every step they have taken has been dictated by a sincere desire to benefit the society, and accelerate the realisation of its principles. The Congress further expresses its fullest conviction that the temporary difficulties arising from too sanguine hopes and implicit confidence may be easily removed by a united

and energetic effort on the part of the members and friends of the society to give full effect and profitable employment to the extended arrangements and greatly improved capabilities of the establishment; the explanations which have been given fully satisfying the Congress that the principal officers of the society perceive the error that has been committed, and that the experience thus gained will prevent a similar course from being pursued by their successors."

It would be wrong to infer from what has been stated that there was any revolt against Robert Owen on the part of his followers. He and those who had been acting with him made a very serious blunder, and the gravity of this was understood. The necessity of changing the policy of the society was seen by all parties, and to change the policy it was necessary there should be a change of men. Robert Owen and his friends of the "Home Colonisation Society" felt this. They had advanced over £14,000 for the purpose of forwarding the operations at Queenwood, and now that they were compelled to call a special Congress, in consequence of the difficulties that had arisen, it was found that, in advancing this large sum, they had exacted no security, and in handing their power back again they asked for no terms beyond such as the future condition of the concern might afford.

When the new men were appointed to carry out the new policy, the retiring officers did not withdraw themselves so long as they could furnish information or advice, and in many ways the plans that had been set on foot to make the establishment remunerative were pursued to the end. In a carefully-written ad-

dress, Robert Owen advised that the farms and gardens should be brought into the highest state of cultivation, and that the hall and other buildings should be completed and furnished, so as to provide accommodation for a number of well-to-do friends as paying boarders. There would have been no lack of these, as it was a desirable place of residence, and many eligible persons were ready to go there when suitable accommodation should be provided.

At the special Congress a delegate from Queenwood was present—Mr. William Sprague, who lived there as saddler and harness-maker. He brought with him instructions from the residents, and an expression of opinion in regard to the work in which they were engaged. He said, "They had met to consider the situation, and to express their opinions in connection with it. What the resident members asked for by resolution was a share in the government of the establishment." On discussion by the members of the Congress, however, it was feared that such an arrangement might lead to inconvenient interferences with the management, and, in the end, it was negatived: but a strong desire was at the same time expressed by the delegates present, that in everything seriously affecting them they should be consulted Inside the establishment a very good feeling prevailed. Mr. Sprague said, "That with reference to the feelings of the members on recent occurrences, at first considerable consternation was created, but, subsequently, explanations had restored confidence, and the strongest determination now existed to do all in their power to aid the success of the establishment. They hoped that any past occurrences would not be reverted

to by the Congress except for the purpose of future guidance."

New officers were appointed, plans of action were settled, a budget drawn up, and the Congress separated without anger or ill-will, in consequence of what had happened, Mr. Finch, the new governor, declaring that in whatever he might do, he would seek the advice of the gentlemen who had just retired from office. It is needless to reproduce here the many unfriendly statements made by the press on these proceedings. There was never the least attempt to make a secret of anything connected with the situation. Critics might have informed themselves very accurately, at any time, of all that was done. But instead of taking the trouble to find out the actual condition of things, the newspapers sent abroad the wildest charges against all concerned with the Hampshire experiment. The whole thing, according to the press, had broken down disgracefully and dishonestly, while Robert Owen and those who acted with him were denounced, and hunted by their deluded and infuriated dupes. So far was this from the fact, that the new president, in his first address to the members of the society, made the following remarks :—

"In commencing the administration of your affairs, I must declare to you that I consider the society in a better position than it has ever yet been placed in. It is true that some temporary inconvenience has arisen from the energy and perseverance with which our venerable founder, the late governor, has pressed forward the grand and glorious objects which are ever present to his mind ; but the extremely generous manner in which those friends who advanced the

funds which have been expended within the last twelve months have met the society on this occasion has given the Congress the firm assurance, that with anything approaching to zeal on your parts it will speedily be found that the position we occupy is a most advantageous one."

This statement was true, but the danger at Queenwood did not lie in the temporary embarrassment, to deal with which the special Congress was called. It was far deeper than this, and even though every inconvenience had been effectually removed, the danger, though postponed, could not have been prevented. It must not be forgotten that the purpose of the experiment was to discover whether labour on the land, labour in the workshop, labour in the school, and such labour in management and government as might be needed, could be so united, and rewards so distributed, as to prevent excessive wealth and excessive poverty existing side by side as a social necessity. Successful farming and gardening, or a successful school and boarding establishment, or any other kind of success outside this, would not have solved the problem. It is a mistake to suppose that the form of government made any part of the danger. This was simply a trial for the purpose of discovering how best to carry on a difficult and special work, and was adopted and abandoned without creating hostile divisions among the members of the society. At the special Congress, one or two men objected to the form of government, and used strong expressions in reference to it, but such language was utterly disregarded by the body of the delegates. Mr. Galpin spoke out of a very intimate acquaintance with the

working of the establishment and the general condition of the society, when he said, in closing the debate on the question of government :—

"As to the unity form of government, the general alterations made in the laws at last Congress embodied entirely his own views as to what was essential to good government. One thing, however, must be understood, every member must now know what measures the executive had in contemplation. This must be known throughout the society. None but ordinary operations should proceed unless they were first published in the *New Moral World.* Their present liabilities must be speedily and entirely got rid of, and no additional ones contracted. The errors that had been committed were financial ones, and in future the amount of funds should always be clearly known by all the members, that their confidence might be obtained."

In fact, all felt that too much had been undertaken considering the means at the command of the society. The work could not be brought to a standstill without serious loss, nor could any other be entered on without additional capital to an amount beyond their power to obtain. The blunder committed could not be rectified, but notwithstanding this the work went on.

Alexander Somerville, who acted as an agent of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and who wrote, in 1842, a series of very interesting letters from the farming districts in the *Morning Chronicle*, visited the Queenwood establishment, and gave a very full account of what he witnessed there.

"Though," he remarks, "I think the Socialists were

foolish to waste three or four years of their time and £30,000[1] or £35,000 of their money in other works than the improvement of the land, they now have such works, and they now are improving the land. And if there are any of the elements of Socialism dangerous to our high land-owners and our venerable institutions, let them be defeated by stepping in front of the Socialists with the spade and the plough, giving to each labourer an implement and his wages, showing him what can be done without being a Socialist. Though there may be fundamental errors in their system, and though much has been said against them, this community, holding one thousand acres of land, giving employment and wages, and reaping profits more liberally than other land-holders around, are not to be despised. And, moreover, it is not to be overlooked that, while they refrain from proselytising by lecturing to the neighbourhood around, they are spreading their influence by their industrial schools. They offer to take, and to some extent have already taken, pupils from all parts of the country to be brought forward in every department of useful knowledge now taught in the best schools, which will be combined with *practical* as well as theoretic instruction in the arts and sciences; besides an infant school, presided over by a lady of great experience and acknowledged talent in this department, whose attention will be mainly directed to the development of the physical powers of the children, the inculcation of good habits, the manners and dispositions, and the formation of correct moral feelings. As their educa-

[1] The amount spent was £30,000, only one half of which was laid out in buildings.

tional prospectus states, they have an elementary school for children between seven and fourteen years, and also a polytechnic school for the instruction of youth from the age of fourteen years and upwards in the theory and practice of agriculture and gardening, and the arts connected therewith, and in various other arts and trades carried on within the establishment. 'The farms,' he continues, 'are managed by a bailiff and assistants of great practical experience, and comprise many varieties of soil and surface. A very extensive and well-arranged garden is being laid out and cultivated, under the direction of an able superintendent, and the other departments of art and manufacture are under the management of persons of acknowledged skill.'"[1]

Mr. Somerville adds:

"The people in the neighbourhood dreaded them when they came at first, but now they respect them. They are bringing from all parts of the kingdom the best improved implements and methods of working; the scattered facts of well-authenticated experiments they are collecting from all the improved agricultural districts and introducing them to a part of the kingdom eminently defective, and in those respects neglected. Amid a poor population they are creating and enjoying wealth; amid an ignorant population they are dispensing education; amid an imperfectly employed population they are spreading employment; amid a population not remarkable for correct moral conduct they are showing themselves as an example which compels the respect of all who know them, and who at first distrusted them."

[1] *Morning Chronicle*, Dec. 23rd, 1842.

The industries carried on were returning a profit, and there was nothing to prevent the undertaking being prosperously continued, had not the extent of the operations to which they were committed, together with the insufficient means at their disposal, hung heavily on those concerned in it.

The aim was to set an example, in the following of which the condition of the people might be improved, by means of education, well-directed employment, and equity in distribution. The task was difficult, the sacrifice considerable, and it is hard to see why those who undertook it should have been subjected to misrepresentation and abuse.

CHAPTER XIV.

End of the Queenwood Experiment. Misrepresentations.

MATTERS went on after the change had taken place much as they had done before the special Congress was held, except that no new extension was made, nor any new obligations incurred. The work already entered on could not be abandoned, though the strictest economy, wherever it could be usefully applied, was enforced. Beyond this, existing obligations were successfully grappled with. Nothing that could be done to overcome existing difficulties, and to bring out a satisfactory result in the end, was left untried.

In the April of the following year, Mr. Finch, whose health was feeble, decided to resign the presidency of the association, and the address in which he made his intention known, published before the meeting of the May Congress, explained the position of the society's affairs at that time.

"The special Congress of our association, called by the late Central Board, in July last, and held in John Street Institution, London, having by unanimous vote called upon me to take the office of president of the association, and in conjunction with an excellent and long-tried friend of the cause, the situation also of

governor of Harmony, as the best means of removing difficulties which had unexpectedly occurred: animated with a love of our divine principles, a determination to use our best endeavours to bring them into practice, and fully relying on the integrity, zeal, and persevering support of the members and friends of the society, we cheerfully accepted the invitation, went down to Harmony, and devoted ourselves to the work assigned to us. I have now the pleasure of stating to our friends, that though very much still remains to be done before Harmony is complete, the objects for which we were chosen have been accomplished. All the most pressing engagements of the society have been discharged in full, the buildings are nearly finished, many improvements in the farms and gardens have been made, the schools have commenced, proper teachers have been engaged, a considerable number of pupils and boarders have arrived, more pupils are promised ; and from these a large revenue is already realised, which, with the surplus produce of the estate, there is every reason to believe will make this interesting experiment self-supporting before the end of the present year. In the meanwhile public opinion has greatly changed in our favour ; the calumnies and falsehoods circulated respecting us have been exposed, the excellence of our system is extremely appreciated, and the receipt of nearly £5,000 since the Congress of July, is the most convincing proof that confidence in the society is undiminished."

The question as to whether the society could have got over its difficulties, if it had pursued the policy acted on by Mr. Finch, need not now be discussed.

When the Congress of May, 1843, met at Queenwood, its first business was to elect a president, and Robert Owen was unanimously chosen to act in that capacity during its sittings. The recommendations of the central board were sufficiently clear, but it will be seen that the means of carrying them out were not absolutely at the command of the society's officers. The report says:—

"In proportion as funds are placed at their disposal, after the completion of the works already commenced, the board will recommend the occupation by the society of the additional estates of Rosehill and Great Bently, and that the cultivation of the whole be carried to the highest pitch that agricultural science will permit. They also recommend that the garden be proceeded with as rapidly as possible, as it will be a great means of support and occupation for the members and pupils, and a source of attraction to all who visit the establishment. They next advise that the schools be placed in the best possible state of organisation, and that the education be made practical, in accordance with the principles of the system, to the greatest possible extent. That a printing press be established to print the general works and tracts of the society, and, as early as possible, the *New Moral World.* That the present trades carried on in the establishment be extended, where desirable, and that additional trades be introduced. That machinery be brought, wherever practicable, to the aid of human labour, and that profitable manufactures be introduced in the order of their utility. The board is convinced that the great means of procuring a profitable return will be derived from the society possessing the most superior skill

and intelligence in performing all the operations they undertake."

The advice given here, however good, does not positively indicate a policy. It is to be followed if funds are forthcoming, but nothing is said as to what shall be done should the funds not be obtained. The original intention having been to combine labour in the workshop and on the land, and to unite with this scholastic instruction, it could not be satisfactory to those who had made this their ideal, and who had subscribed for the purpose of realising it, to see success aimed at by establishing boarding-houses. This was possibly the best thing that could be done in the circumstances, and it is not unlikely, that by trusting to this under the pressure that had arisen, success might have been in the end attained; but to patiently labour on in the expectation that such would be the case required much self-denial, and much of that deferred hope which maketh the heart sick. There was, for a time, a mitigation of the money pressure, activity in pushing forward improvements, and apparent ground for a growing confidence; but the progress which was made was of a nature to suggest, at every step, questions as to whether this was the kind of success originally aimed at. There were not wanting men throughout the society who encouraged a feeling of dissatisfaction, and although a determined struggle against this feeling took place, it continued to spread, so that in a little time it became clear it would produce most undesirable results, and that the unity so much to be wished for was in danger of being destroyed. A distinct party grew into existence, and several persons, from the best

motives, connected themselves with it as leaders and supporters. Widely different views were taken, those in power believing that the first thing to be aimed at was success, if not by the most preferable means, by those that lay nearest. The objectors, on the other hand, believed that if the establishment were managed in accordance with the original intention, by increasing the number of residents and finding work for them, and by limiting the labourers or dispensing with them altogether, so as to provide more accommodation for resident members, the necessary funds would be found.

At the Congress of 1844, such alterations were made in the laws of the society and the selection of its officers as were found necessary to ensure the carrying out of the new policy. Mr. George Simpson of Manchester became general secretary, and Mr. John Buxton, of the same city, president. Mr. Simpson was a man of very good ability as an accountant, and of high character. Mr. Buxton was a man of good intention, and beyond this little could be said.

Had both, however, possessed the best possible qualifications, they would have found the plans they undertook to carry out utterly impracticable. In such an experiment it is necessary not only that the principle should be sound, but also that there should be the utmost confidence placed in the man at the head of it. Robert Owen and the friends who worked with him, were known and respected all over the country in connection with the Socialist movement, while Mr. Simpson and Mr. Buxton, though of good local repute, were not known throughout the society,

and, therefore, did not obtain so general a support from the members.

Besides, it became very evident to those acquainted with the actual condition of things, that any attempt to increase the expenditure must soon bring the whole thing to a standstill. Apprehensions were aroused among the boarders and the parents of the children, who were now a source of fair revenue to the schools. The prospect which thus disclosed itself of an increased expenditure and a decreased revenue became alarming. Outside enthusiasm did not fulfil the expectations of those who trusted in it, and ultimately the experiment was brought to an end. The value of the property as security for the liabilities began to diminish. To stop this the trustees took action, and such distribution of the assets was made as left all connected with the proceedings without any kind of imputation on their personal honour. There was much difference of opinion, some recriminatory argument and opposition; but during the proceedings by which the estate was wound up, no charge or scandal ever came out of this in reference to any one concerned.

I have endeavoured to explain what I take to be the principal reasons why the experiment at Queenwood failed, though many minor defects of policy may have contributed. Many people rejoiced at the defeat. Mr. Booth, in his book "Robert Owen," seeks to account for the ill-will manifested towards the society and those belonging to it, by saying that, "The Socialists certainly advanced their views in the most offensive manner, and the leaders of the movement courted controversy." This is the reverse of the truth.

Everything possible was done to prevent the giving of needless offence, and in proof of this as much might be produced from the pages of the *New Moral World* as would fill a volume. That harsh and offensive expressions were sometimes used is certain, but it should be remembered, in extenuation, that there were many speakers and much provocation, and it is a fact that offensive language was uniformly condemned. The same writer says that "the 'Book of the New Moral World,' in which Mr. Owen had fully explained the new system, was adopted as a sacred writing, and read in the services of the Church;" the fact being that a belief in Mr. Owen's writings was authoritatively declared unnecessary, as will be seen from the correspondence given in connection with the Edinburgh charter. Mr. Booth, at page 194, also quotes a number of exceedingly offensive expressions, as used by Robert Owen and his followers in speaking of the Christian religion; and in a footnote refers his readers to vol. 4, page 239, of the *New Moral World.* Having referred to the volume and page given, I can say that it contains not a single word to justify Mr. Booth's charge. The page is occupied by a long letter extracted from the *Coventry Standard*, in which the writer attempts to fasten the growth of unbelief on the influence of mechanics' institutions.

It is a pity that a writer like Mr. Booth, who seems to be a zealous professing Christian, should have sought the promotion of any good object by circulating groundless charges, conscious, as he must have been, that such charges were personally injurious to those against whom they were made. There cannot be any doubt that much of the rejoicing over the Queenwood

failure was the result of a false conception of Robert Owen and his associates, as well as of the work in which they had engaged ; and while on this subject, it may not be inappropriate, before concluding the present chapter, to refer to certain misguiding statements which occur in the books of those who have dealt with Owen and his proceedings. I do not propose to examine the many errors to be found in the several works treating of the labours of Robert Owen; but in some of the cases where these errors are unjust to the character of Owen, or tend to lower the credit of the movement he originated and led, a few words of correction cannot be considered out of place.

The statements made by Mr. Booth nearly always tend to degrade Owen both as a thinker and a man of business, while his friends and followers are spoken of as if they were in the constant habit of advocating every kind of extreme thing in the most offensive manner. Nothing can be more reprehensible than this method of dealing with public men and public movements, than to select odd passages from the speeches of extreme or indiscreet men in proof of such statements. Mr. Booth, however, goes beyond this, in dealing with the things which he attributes to Owen and his adherents. I have followed him in his references to the documents from which he professes to quote, and have so frequently found his assertions to be without foundation, that I have come to the conclusion he made them in the belief that no one would take the trouble to test his accuracy. Among other things, he says of the Socialists that they " never lost an opportunity of outraging the feelings of Christians." Nothing can be further from the truth, as every reason-

able affort was made to avoid giving offence to all men of honest conviction. At page 199, Mr. Booth gives the following extracts from a lecture delivered against Owen and his system by Mr. Giles, a Baptist minister at Leeds; observing that the reverend gentleman was remarkable for much energy of thought and expression. "Socialism was a union of all sects but the worshippers of God, and all practices but those of charity and virtue." Of the Socialists' paper, the same gentleman remarked that it "offered a way to perfect happiness by blending the blasphemy of the atheist with the sensuality of the brute." This language is certainly as energetic as it is untrue and libellous. Yet this is a fair example of the accusations which were brought against Owen. Because he denied that punishment was an effectual method of dealing with crime, where, through a want of education, there existed so much ignorance and brutality, it was said that his design was to remove all obstacles to individual vice and a general corruption of morals. The wild absurdity of this did not carry it outside the region of belief. Reiteration amounted to proof, and hence a man of unblemished character, seeking the promotion of justice, had to bear through life the heaviest weight that unscrupulousness of accusation could lay on him.

His ideas on the marriage question were dealt with in the same spirit, but Mr. Sargant puts this matter in its true light when he tells us that Owen's object "was not to abolish marriage, but to improve and render it a more effective means of promoting happiness and virtue," and it goes on to say that "he demanded less than Milton and Luther would have granted him;

that his aim was by no means to lessen conjugal fidelity or the permanence of marriage, but to promote to the greatest possible extent true purity, delicacy, virtue, and happiness." He desired to see marriage a civil contract, accompanied by a law by which divorce, under wise arrangements, and on principles of common sense, might be obtained equally for the poor as well as for the rich.

In justifying the Bishop of Exeter's attack on Owen, Mr. Booth says !—" It is not in the interest of truth that each noisy prophet should strengthen the number of his adherents from the ignorant who are attracted by his violence. And the Bishop of Exeter, and those who thought with him, had exceptional cause for anxiety. A dangerous heresy was abroad that might entail misfortune to which no limits could be assigned ; and if, as they well knew, it is no longer possible to maintain truth by law, they might at least claim for the majority of the nation an exemption from the outrageous blasphemy of reckless men ; they might, with perfect justice, insist that the propaganda should be carried on with a due regard to the feelings of respect and awe with which those who are most entitled to consideration are accustomed to contemplate the solemn mystery that hangs around the destiny of man."

I have already described the part played by Robert Owen, and by those who acted with him, at the time referred to ; and I repeat that neither he nor they ever addressed the people in language such as that indicated by Mr. Booth ; that they never attracted or sought to inflame the passions of the ignorant by their violence ; but, on the contrary, did all in their

power, during a period of dangerous popular excitement, to prevent violence of whatever kind. It is not very easy to exonerate Mr. Booth from intentional misleading; but whether he erred intentionally or otherwise, the charges he makes are as unfounded as they are calumnious.

Mr. Sargant, who has written his work, "Robert Owen, and his Philosophy," in a fairer spirit, commits serious mistakes in speaking of Owen's character. He insists strongly on his "egotism," "vanity," "conceit," or whatever else an offensive self-assertion may be called; and this charge is supported by reference to the undue importance he is said to have attached to the work in which he was engaged. But even if this implication be true, did that to which it has reference really arise from any disposition on his part to underrate other men, and the efforts with which their lives were connected, as compared with himself; or from the consequence he attached to the work of human improvement which the condition of the people rendered so necessary? His behaviour and speech, in his intercourse with others, was considerate almost to a fault. His deportment was as unassuming as it was amiable. He seemed never to consider anybody below him, so that his bearing had in it neither the reserve nor the arrogance of patronage; and very often those who were least in agreement with him in opinion were attracted by the kindliness of his manner. Mr. Sargant also speaks of Owen's drawbacks as a self-instructed man, and condemns the slight respect which, he tells us, Owen had for the higher culture of educated men. This is certainly a mistake Owen frequently censured what

he called "learned ignorance," and we have the authority of Milton for saying that "though a linguist should pride himself to have all the tongues that Babel cleft the world into, yet if he have not studied the solid things in them, as well as the words and lexicons, he were nothing so much to be esteemed a learned man, as any yeoman or tradesman competently wise in his mother dialect only." No one had a higher esteem than Owen for true culture, which he regarded as embracing among other things, the knowledge which enabled its possessor to be of practical service to the living world round about him; and as allied to a wisdom that had nothing in common with the mere vanity of scholarship. I acknowledge very willingly the number of kind and just things Mr. Sargant has said of Owen; but the charge of undervaluing the importance of education can hardly, with any justice, be brought against the man who considered the education of the whole people the truest foundation for national morality, and surest means to a safe and steady national progress. When, in addition, we are told that the opposition with which Owen and his fellows met was caused by their own offensiveness and by their habit of giving insulting expression to outrageous opinions, this statement may be met with an unhesitating contradiction. The more correct explanation of the opposition alluded to, lies in the fact that people, as a rule, object to have their opinions, their prejudices, or their interests interfered with, even in the most gentle and considerate manner. Owen's movement alarmed many persons of very honest and sincere convictions; also many with strong prejudices, and

others whose fears sprang from what they believed to be an attack on their interests. To admit this is simply to recognise facts which have been developed in every stage of the world's progress, and is therefore no special reproach either to the men who opposed, or the men who led the agitation. It is true that zealots, in whatever cause, have usually found it difficult to act temperately towards those who oppose them, or to at all times pay the most scrupulous respect to the opinions of others. This will, no doubt, to some extent apply to those who took part in Owen's agitation, as well as to those who were antagonistic to it. To claim for the former an absolute immunity in this regard, would be to claim for them infallibility; a freedom from human imperfection; but this admission being made, it is only right to couple with it the assertion that the movement generally, and its leaders, never sanctioned, but, on the contrary, invariably condemned anything that could justify the charges to which I have referred as having been brought against it.

In concluding these references to Mr. Sargant's book, I may mention that he is in error when he states that Owen entertained, as a pet fallacy, the "vulgar" belief that "machinery supersedes labour, and causes distress." Mr. Sargant himself admits that it does so in particular cases and for a time, and I think it has been shown that Owen never insisted on more than this, and never entertained the idea condemned by Mr. Sargant. He had the highest appreciation of the value of machinery, but maintained that increased power of production should bring to all a commensurate increase of comfort. The assurance is also

given that "Owen's grand error" was his entire neglect of the population question. This is certainly not the fact, as he expressed himself very strongly on the subject. He regarded the ideas of Malthus as mischievously untrue, and stated his reasons for so doing. He may have been wrong in the position he took up, but it cannot be said that he entirely neglected the population question. He held, in fact, very clear ideas on the subject, which were the result of much study and deliberation.

CHAPTER XV.

Close of Leadership. Parentage of Store Movement.

WITH the winding-up of the Queenwood experiment Robert Owen's career as the leader of a public movement may be said to have closed. His activity in what he sincerely believed to be the cause of truth only closed with his life ; his earnest desire for and hope in the progress of the human race never deserted him ; and what is perhaps more remarkable, he never suffered himself to be cast down or dejected. Most men who set their hearts upon the attainment of some great end, have been troubled with painful moments of despair, when they turn their faces to the wall. He never despaired of the work to which he from the first set his hand ; though over and over again he was defeated and driven back. This indomitable courage and unwavering hopefulness was not in him the result of perversity of spirit, of recklessness as to consequences. He believed that when once a true principle in relation to life was seen and accepted, its triumph was but a question of time, and that whether the time should be long or short depended on the activity and wisdom of its advocates. He was not indifferent to failure, but he believed that the work in which he was engaged was good, and that it was

his duty not to lose heart. When his last great defeat came at Queenwood he was seventy-five, but though younger men were cast down he was as calm and confident as ever. When things were at the worst, and one of his friends expressed regret at certain occurrences which, as it was thought, were mainly instrumental in causing the disaster, he replied, "I am an old man, and I have watched narrowly the events which have most influenced my life and my fortunes, and have noted that things which when they happened appeared to me most unfortunate, when their consequences were developed proved themselves to be most fortunate, while others which, at the moment of their occurrence, brought me pleasure and satisfaction, frequently turned out to be unfortunate and unsatisfactory. This being the case, I wait until I can fairly estimate the consequences—if good, I rejoice in them; if otherwise, my disappointment arrives gradually, and is rendered less painful."

It has been alleged that there was a tendency towards despotism in Owen, and that at Queenwood he endeavoured to set up a kind of oligarchy with power to compel obedience. This has been started by several persons who knew little or nothing of Owen personally. A better knowledge of his character and motives would have prevented such a misconception. Owen had a strong belief in settled pre-arranged plans as an indispensable preliminary to successful action. He also believed in one man governing with full power to work out the plans agreed upon; while he distrusted the kind of management that was open to interference and intermeddling on the part of others when practical operations were going forward. On

the other hand he never advocated an authority which should be above criticism and censure, or in conjunction with which there did not exist an opportunity for the expression of discontent and disapprobation.

As already pointed out, however, the setting up of the kind of authority that existed in the movement at the head of which Owen stood, especially in connection with the experiment at Queenwood, was a mistake. It is necessary that every leader of the people whose object is to obtain for them political power, and who desires to see that power properly used when it is obtained, should above all things seek to train them to a wise use of whatever influence they may possess during their preparatory struggles. When they begin to distrust themselves up to the point of self-exclusion from participation in public affairs, or when they permit others to exclude them under any plea whatever, especially the plea of incompetence, from that moment are they apt to become the tools and the victims of those who may desire to mislead them. Since government was first instituted, as a necessary part of the business of mankind, the injustice that has been suffered may be in the main measured by the extent to which the people have been excluded from power. This being recognised as a fact in connection with the past history of the world, the first thing to be aimed at is the admission of the people to a share in the management of national affairs. This is what the friends of the people should assert, and what the people themselves should enforce. That such a system might, like other systems, lead to blunders of various kinds may be admitted, but when we have given such an assertion all the force it is

entitled to, it is but an assumption that becomes less and less in its probability as the people increase in intelligence and in the habit of exercising constitutional rights. On the other hand, the exclusion of the people and the wrongs suffered by them in consequence of the powerlessness such exclusion involves, cover the pages of history in connection with every country in the world in every age.

It is not to be maintained, either in regard to politics or religion, that whatever has, with slight variations of form, preserved its influence for centuries, can be suddenly destroyed, and new dogmas, however suitable to a newer era, be as suddenly set up. What can be done, however, is to endeavour to instil into minds of men an instinctive love of truth, justice, and humanity, so as to qualify them to wisely mould and modify dogma and usage in deference to the changes demanded by an advancing civilization.

Robert Owen had a new doctrine to preach, and a new practice to recommend; but instead of giving new and improved applications of old methods for the purpose of introducing and establishing these, he and his fellow-workers invented a new system which, by its novelty, excited differences of opinion and became a difficulty in their path, and was, so far as it led to discussion and division, an impediment to success.

It must be admitted that however good the object aimed at, a failure, however honourable, places those who have incurred it at the mercy of the unfriendly. The failure of Owen's movement has been attributed by many people to his ideas in regard to certain of the beliefs and habits of the world: to his ideas on

religion, marriage, education, and human character. With the exception, however, of the doctrine of the formation of character, and the idea of industrial villages, Owen's followers were not pledged to his special notions, and no more sought to carry them out than did any other portion of the British community. His ideas on religion, whatever they were, were not accepted by those who engaged in the Socialist movement, or those who sought to carry out the Queenwood experiment. They were no doubt occasionally discussed, but never with a view to their general adoption, and when, after the collapse, the inhabitants of Queenwood went back to their ordinary occupations, each carried away his own special convictions, just as he brought them. With regard to Owen's views on marriage, he considered the marriage laws of Great Britain unjust, and advocated a system of divorce that should not need a previous criminality to make it available. He went on this question beyond the subsequent alteration in the marriage laws in England, but not so far as the law goes in certain of the States in America. He lectured on the subject, and a brief report of what he said was published, which, though perhaps correct so far as it went, lacked the fulness necessary to prevent mistakes and misinterpretations. But whether the views expressed by Owen on this subject were objectionable or not, they were his own, and in no way mixed up with the proceedings of his followers, who never professed to go with him in all things. No marriage was disturbed for any reason in connection with Owen's views on this question. It is true that the Bishop of Exeter and others made charges against the society on these

grounds; but they utterly misrepresented the views of Owen, and in addition committed the error of attributing them to a body of men who never accepted them, and by whom they were more than once openly repudiated.

Robert Owen's friends remained as numerous and as constant as ever, but to whatever cause his failure may be attributed, it was so generally referred to a want of soundness in his principles, rather than to the want of means to carry them out, that any attempt at a renewed agitation would have been unsuccessful. As a writer in the October number of the *Westminster Review* for 1860 says, the Rochdale experiment which commenced in 1844 was on foot when Queenwood failed, but it was not constructed on a similar basis. The objects and the means by which they were to be obtained were different, though they were as nearly as possible identical with the original store movement. If the first store movement and the second are considered together, and if it be borne in mind that the promoters of the first movement were those who tried the Queenwood experiment, and that the originators of the second store movement were many of them the friends and followers of Robert Owen, the inspiration and origin of the vast work now on foot will be understood. When it is added to this, that, when they were about to commence their new venture, the founders of the Rochdale Store sent a deputation to Queenwood for advice and instruction, the parentage of the present movement will be apparent. This is stated here not for the purpose of transferring the credit of having originated the present store movement from any one set of men to any other, but to show that the

great idea which has proved itself so successful, and which is now taking such rapid possession of the public mind, is the result of many years' agitation, of much local and varied experiment; that in its failures and in its triumph it furnishes a proof of what unwearied and peaceable endeavour may do in promoting the welfare of the working people, and the success by which such efforts may be ultimately crowned, when pursued with an honest determination to overcome the obstacles which at first impede them. The first men who entered on the work took their discomfitures and losses cheerfully, without losing heart or hope. They were succeeded by others, who, though varying their experiments, were still defeated; but there were again others who, with altered plans, tried once more, and who, conquering the great initial difficulty of poverty, have become possessors of capital sufficient to commence and carry on any enterprise in connection with production or distribution. The present men in the co-operative movement owe much to those who preceded them, but at the same time it has been left for them to prove that the highest purposes may be attained through the humblest agencies, and that progress may be secured without violence or wrong, when the people seek the improvement of their condition by intelligent and peaceable means.

Robert Owen had at all times, and under all circumstances, a horror of violence. He knew enough to understand that though statesmen are at all times ready to make professions of peace, they are just as ready, when they dream that some advantage is to be gained, to make encroachments that lead to war; and perhaps of all possible wars that he most dreaded was

one between Great Britain and the United States. At about the time when the affairs of Queenwood were brought to a close, something approaching to a serious misunderstanding had arisen in regard to the North-West Boundary Question in America. His eldest son, Robert Dale Owen, was at that time an active member of Congress, and he at once took it upon himself to visit America, and to see what with the aid of his son could be done to settle the matter in an amicable spirit. The newspapers, as is their wont, had begun to put exasperating one-sided views before their readers, and the ordinary fermentation of accusation and anger was actively proceeding. Robert Owen at this time was in his seventy-fourth year, but he nevertheless determined to do all in his power to get at the merits of the case, in order that he might assist in creating in both countries a disposition for peaceable settlement. On this errand he crossed the Atlantic four times, and as he always had access to the chief men among our British statesmen, and everybody who knew him believed him to be a man of strictly honest purpose, he was listened to with respect, and with as much confidence as politicians and statesmen could be expected to give to anyone outside their own craft. On his return from his second trip, he called upon me on a summer morning before five o'clock, and remained for several hours, during which he related, in a most animated strain, what he had done, and what his anticipations were. He walked about the room briskly while he ran on with his narrative, and seemed hopeful that his efforts might not be entirely without effect in helping to preserve peace between the two nations.

CHAPTER XVI.

Termination of Career.

AFTER this there is but little to record in connection with Owen's personal activity as a philanthropist and reformer, though he would often call his friends together to speak with them of what might be done in furthering the objects to attain which he had striven so long and so faithfully. He apparently gave up all thought of any new experiment, but he never failed to point out the grounds on which rested his hope that fresh activities would carry the work forward ; that new plans and efforts would ultimately lead to a permanent improvement in the condition of the people; by which, as was at all times obvious, he did not simply mean that the poor should have a more equitable share in the national wealth, in order that they might, after their own fashion, imitate the luxuriousness which was corrupting the rich. His own life, from its commencement to its close, was simple, unostentatious, and temperate. Nothing shocked him more than the arrogant displays and half-brutal assumptions of wealth, becoming every day more intensified through the rapid accumulation of money in the hands of men who, blinded by a sense of their self-importance and power, took no pains to either hide or repair defects which rendered their sudden

prosperity incongruous and offensive. But he felt that until the masses of the people had been raised above the contaminations of squalor, ignorance and want, no struggle to secure to them the higher conditions of life that belong to decency and independence could be very effective; and during the years that followed the failure at Queenwood, he never lost an opportunity of helping forward whatever aimed at the social elevation of the people. His belief in spiritualism, of which I shall here say a few words, was chiefly influenced by his sympathy with the struggles and sufferings of his fellow-creatures, which never ceased to disquiet and perplex him. His imaginary revelations from the spirit world referred to this almost exclusively. To the last his entire thought was to enforce the great truth that the creating power of the universe had furnished men with abundance for the satisfaction of their legitimate wants, with the means of developing their highest intellectual faculties and moral susceptibilities, and that it was their duty to take counsel together and heartily co-operate for the attainment of all that was implied in an acknowledgment of this truth.

Much has been said and written in ridicule of Robert Owen's belief in spiritualism during the last few years of his life. He had, during his long public career, so much to say as to the necessity of being guided by the proved facts of life, that it was a triumph to those who had opposed him and a disappointment to a large majority of his friends, when he made known his first communications with the spirits, and did so by adopting the methods and the language of the ordinary believers in spiritualism. It is not sur-

prising that many people made themselves merry at his expense, for having allowed himself to be drawn into what is still considered one of the most absurd and least defensible superstitions of the modern world.

It is not necessary to discuss the truth or falsehood of spirit revelations generally. From the time of the oracles of old to the spirit rappers of to-day, there has always existed in the human mind a disposition to pry into the secrets of the other world. The methods devised have, as a rule, not been very successful; but, however much they may have failed, or however ludicrously they may have blundered into discredit, there have always been new plans; new experts have come to the front, and new revelations been made known which never failed to find new believers. To say nothing of the multitudes of ordinary mortals who have fallen into such spiritual snares, many men of the highest and brightest intellect have accepted as true absurdities of the wildest kind.

In speaking of Robert Owen and his belief in spirit-rapping, one or two circumstances should be borne in mind. He had turned his eightieth year—his sense of hearing had become so much dulled that he had to depend a good deal on others for explanations of what he but imperfectly heard, and as the simplicity and truthfulness of his mind were well known, it is easy to understand with what ease he might be imposed on by any person who from whatever motive might desire to deceive him. He never suspected in anybody a disposition to impose on him, and this confidence on his part, as is the case with many men, was increased, if those who desired to take

advantage of him expressed a perfect agreement with his opinions and principles. He had been before the world for fully half a century. He had laboriously, and, wherever possible, by practical experiment, sought to convince men of the truth of his views, and in this life-long labour he had borne many a reverse, and suffered many a disappointment. We must not, then, be too severe in our criticism, if at an advanced age, towards the close of such a life, he was induced to listen to what were declared to be messages from friends in whom he trusted and who had passed away; especially when they comforted him with promises that at no distant time his hopes would be fulfilled. In his ordinary conversation he was a man of remarkable frankness, and as his memory was good, he would often refer to old times and relate anecdotes of many of the people with whom he had had intercourse. In this way any person in frequent communication with him, might easily acquire a knowledge of many circumstances connected with his past life, as well as of the characters and dispositions of those with whom he had associated. In addition to this, he possessed strong family affections, and when persuaded that it was possible to hold communication with old friends, and with those who had been still dearer to him, it is not hard to believe that the yearnings of his heart might overcome the doubts suggested by his understanding. The voices of the living had ceased to speak of hope in connection with his schemes for the regeneration of mankind, and he therefore turned to the voices of the dead, and kept his hope alive and his heart light by the promises he received. An American woman named Hayden, in conjunction,

probably, with some of his friends who were already believers in spiritualism, assisted in leading him to this new faith. It is likely, also, that his eldest son, Robert Dale Owen, being a strong believer, had something to do with the inclining of his mind in this direction. The departed with whom he held council, and whom, it must be confessed, he frequently consulted on trivial matters, were, when in the flesh, sensible and able people, and the advice they gave him generally sounded very much like what might be reasonably uttered by any intelligent person. He remarked how uniformly they discountenanced all divisions of class, country, and colour. The object of the spirits he declared, "was to permanently benefit all human kind equally, without reference to divisions of any kind." They said, "do not dispute with those who do not and cannot yet believe in these (to them) new and strange manifestations, for we adopt means to convince all, without your doing more than stating the facts within your own knowledge and experience."

In one of his publications, the "Future of the Human Race," he gives an account of his conversations with the Duke of Kent, which, had they taken place between two ordinary individuals, would not be worth the least attention. Some of them are very trivial, but as spiritual *séances* seldom went beyond useless communications, the only apparent reason for their repetition is that importance was attached to them as relating to the public affairs with which Owen was at that time engaged. That Owen was a very sincere and honest believer in spiritualism, during a few of the latter years of his life, there can be no doubt. He carried with him to the spirits, a heart overladen with sorrow

for human suffering, and a painful anxiety as to how it might be mitigated; and of one thing we may be certain, that whatever the ground of his belief, the great sustaining hope of his new faith was that the impenetrable veil might be lifted, and that he might see in near prospect a world made happier by a wiser use of the blessings bestowed by God.

Any argument on the truth or falsehood of spiritualism would here be out of place. It is doubtful whether such a question ever was or will be much influenced by argument. Yet it is, I think, impossible for those who knew Robert Owen, who were acquainted with the character of his mind, not to conjecture that he was imposed upon: that questions were suggested and answers made up in order to serve the purpose of those who were practising on the credulity of the public.

CHAPTER XVII.

Conclusion.

FOR the last ten or twelve years of his life, the proceedings of Robert Owen had ceased to be discussed in the newspapers and on platforms. It need not, however, be concluded from this that he was altogether inactive. He republished a considerable portion of his earlier writings, among other things his plans for dealing with the wretched condition of Ireland. He restated his views on national education, maintaining that, "the great want of the world was a good training from birth, and a sound practical education for all, based on true principles." He drew up proposals for a treaty of federation between Great Britain and the United States of North America, the gist of which was that Great Britain and America should declare their interests to be the same; should agree to a federative union which to all other countries should be admitted, and recognise it as a duty to terminate war and live in the abundance of peaceful industry and friendly exchange. Though this cannot be regarded otherwise than as a dream, it might not be amiss if the statesman of the world could have visions somewhat similar.

The French Revolution of 1848, and the disturbances that followed on the Continent led to much

discussion as well as to some very important public action in England. Christian Socialism, with the Rev. F. D. Maurice at its head, was a far more important movement than it at first appeared to be. The foremost actors, being for the most part men of exceptional ability, soon came to exercise a strong influence on public opinion, and though the old Socialists did not rally to them as a body, very large numbers individually sought to forward their objects. These were years of breaking up, rather than of formation and advance; but for what they contained of practical work in the direction of progress, the country is largely indebted to Mr. Maurice and his friends. What they had to say reached the ears of the most intelligent and thoughtful of the old Socialists and Chartists, and as their appeals were made on the ground of a lofty and liberal Christian unity, and in a profound conviction of the necessity of peaceful effort, there can be no question that their influence was not only well-timed, but most wholesome and valuable in its results. Robert Owen was too old and too much occupied with his own plans to take any active part with Mr. Maurice and his followers, even had it been desirable that he should have done so; but they had always his good wishes, and, whenever an opportunity offered, his good word.

The formation of the Social Science Association was also hailed by Owen with enthusiasm, as he believed that it would in time produce excellent results; and though its labours have been represented as not at all commensurate with its pretensions, there can be little doubt that its discussions and publications have had a most beneficial effect in helping the various reforms

since entered on. The first meeting of the Social Science Association was held at Birmingham, in 1857. Robert Owen attended, and read a paper entitled "The Human Race Governed without Punishment." At this time he was in his eighty-sixth year. In the following year it met at Liverpool, and though he had during the interval been losing strength, he nevertheless determined to be present. On this journey Mr. James Rigby accompanied him, for, though he was cheerful and courageous, it was evident that the end was approaching. It has been said that his determination to be present at this Congress was the result of mere restlessness, or it might be vanity. Those who knew him best believed him to be influenced by a different motive. It has also been asserted that what he had to say had become tiresome by repetition. So is it told of Saint John that his constant cry was "Little children, love one another," and that when asked why he repeated this so frequently, he answered that it included everything. For fifty years Owen's mind dwelt constantly on the importance of a sound moral and intellectual training for the young, as the most effectual means by which to secure the exercise of justice, humanity and mutual consideration among men ; as the only safe foundation for national prosperity. It is perhaps natural, therefore, that his persistence in urging this view upon the attention of others, should be irksome to those who differed from him, or who did not care to be repeatedly confronted with all that bore evidence to a neglect of duty.

Upon arriving in Liverpool, Owen had to take to his bed ; but was carried from there in a sedan chair to the platform of the Congress, so that he might in

person deliver his last message. Lord Brougham led him to the front, and supported him when he commenced to read his paper. In a moment or so he broke down. His friends gathered about him, again placed him in the sedan chair, and sorrowfully carried him back to the bed from which he had just before been taken, and where he lay for an hour or more quite unconscious.

Having rallied somewhat after a fortnight's rest, he decided to travel to his native town and to die there. When he arrived at Newtown, he and Mr. Rigby sought for accommodation in the house in which he had been born. This not being obtainable, he took up his quarters next door, or next door but one; and after a while felt, as he thought, so much improved by his native air, that he returned to Liverpool. Upon reaching there, however, he felt convinced that his earthly labours were over, and set out once more for Newtown, that his life might end where it had begun. His eldest son, Robert Dale Owen, who was at that time *chargé d'affaires* at Naples, in the presidency of Franklin Pierce, hurried over to England; arriving in time to be present at his father's death. The following is the letter in which he announced the event.

"November 17th, 1858.

"It is all over. My dear father passed away this morning, at a quarter before seven, as quietly and gently as if he had been falling asleep. There was not the least struggle, not the contraction of a limb or a muscle, not an expression of pain on his face. His breathing gradually became slower and slower, until at last it ceased so imperceptibly, that even as I held

his hand I could scarcely tell the moment when he no longer breathed. His last words, distinctly pronounced about twenty minutes before his death, were, '*Relief has come.*' About half-an-hour before he said, '*Very easy and comfortable.*'"

He lies in the old Churchyard at Newtown, by a picturesque bend of the Severn, in the grave in which his parents are buried.

In tracing the main incidents of Robert Owen's life, I have omitted many things such as belong to the work of the ordinary biographer. My reasons for doing this were referred to in the opening chapter, where I spoke of that which gave to such a career its chief interest. I may also, at times, have appeared to assume the tone of the advocate, rather than that of a simple narrator. This I venture to think excusable. His principles were novel in the method in which they were advanced, and in the application he sought to give them. Almost necessarily, as I have already said, he offended prejudices, and disturbed personal and class interests, and those who, from whatever cause, disapproved of his principles or failed to understand his motives, made him the object of an attack in connection with which they misrepresented his views and discredited his efforts. I, in consequence, have felt it encumbent on me to enter upon fuller details than I otherwise might have considered necessary, in vindication of his ideas and policy.

It frequently happens that though a man sees clearly what he means, and understands distinctly what he intends to do, he may express himself so as to be misunderstood by those who listen to him when

he speaks, and who read what he writes. I do not insist that Robert Owen always explained himself in the clearest possible manner, though I am satisfied he took much trouble to do so. However this may be, his views as he explained them, and as his opponents interpreted them, were not in agreement. As I have stated, much that he had to say was opposed to prejudices which existed in the public mind, and many of his proposals alarmed men who thought their interests endangered. He therefore incurred strong opposition, and much misconception and misrepresentation. It was not a habit with him to indulge in controversies of denial, contradiction, retort, or counter accusation. His almost invariable practice was to state and restate his propositions, and leave the result to time; but though this might have been sufficient, had the channels of communication with the public been equally open to both sides, and the disposition to fairly investigate the questions in dispute been all that it should have been, as matters stood, only the adverse side received attention from the general public; not only because the press shut out what Owen had to say in his own behalf, but because trouble is seldom taken to hunt after rebutting evidence where a desire to believe the charges made predominates.

Owen's personal friends had ample opportunity of understanding his ideas correctly, and as I had to discuss in public with those who were most violently opposed to him, I often sought him for the purpose of obtaining such explanation as might assist me in the work I was called upon to perform. I think I may say that from conversations occurring frequently

and extending over a period of ten years, I came to accurately comprehend his ideas. The peculiarities of thought attributed to him were not his, but were, as a rule, invented for him. His views were not eccentric, but they were new and very strange; and his failures, where he failed, were the result of insufficient means, rather than of defective plans.

The agitation of Owen was unsuccessful in its immediate results; but though the immediate consummation of our hopes be denied, it is for us to work on as wisely and faithfully as we can, trusting the fulfilment will come, perhaps in a better way and at a time more suitable than any we could appoint. For everything done by Robert Owen and his friends in founding co-operative villages and workshops, there is ample recompense in the present success of the co-operative idea. I think it constitutes a special claim on our gratitude that Owen brought into practical activity for the public good, the energies of the humblest and the poorest, to augment the vast popular power by which the present co-operative movement is sustained. It is only since Owen's influence has been felt that it can be truly said the masses of the people have been brought collectively into action for the promotion of objects which have been attended by results that are likely to be permanent, because, while they secure general advantages, they confer general discipline and strength. The co-operative movement is rapidly becoming a national movement, and a national movement, sustained by the development and activity of an increasing popular knowledge, can never attain the

limit of its usefulness so long as any good work remains to be done.

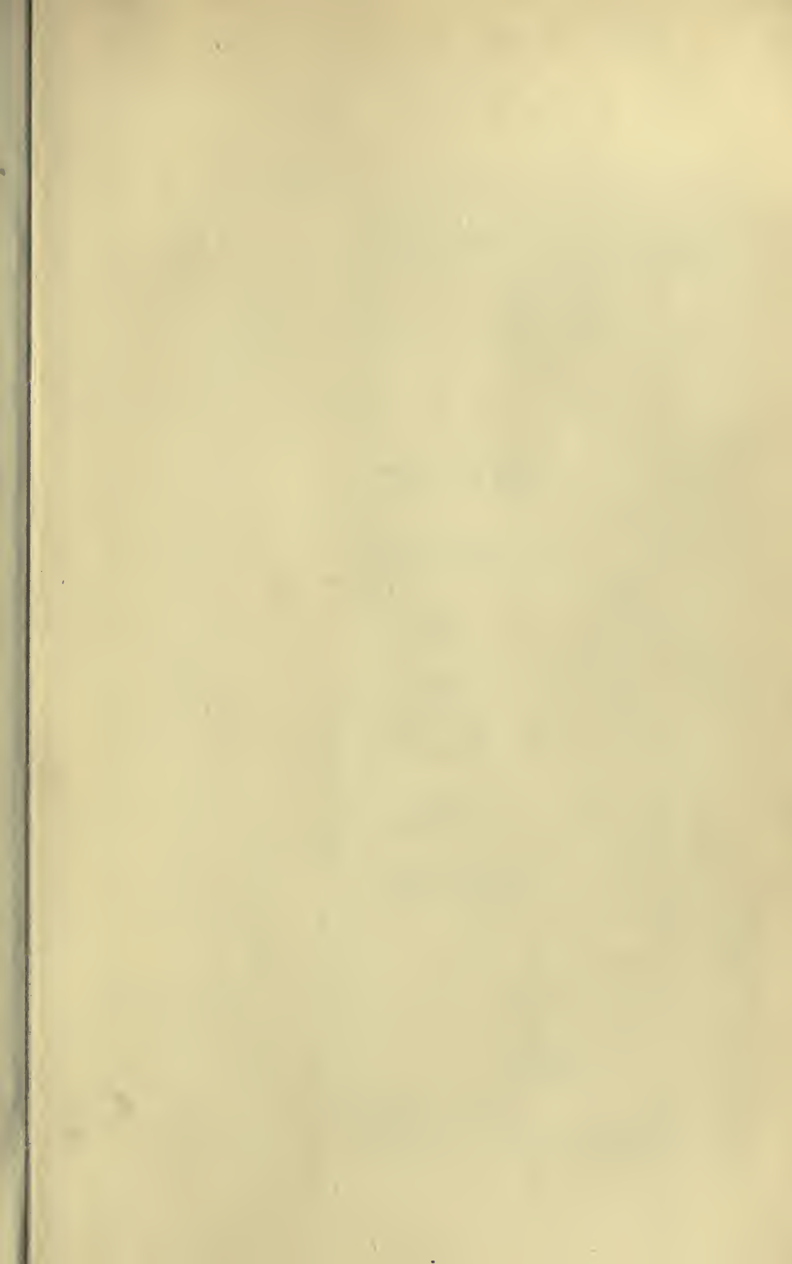
> No man's labour for good is in vain,
>   Tho' he win not the crown but the cross ;
> Every wish for man's good is a gain,
>   Every doubt of man's gain is a loss.
> Not the price that we bargain to pay,
>   But the price that she sets on herself,
> Is the value of truth. Who can weigh
>   What the weight of her worth is in pelf?
> To the soul, by whose life-long endeavour,
>   Age hath won from the losses of youth,
> The mere loss of an untruth is ever
>   Good as great as the gain of a truth.

In this faith Owen worked without intermission: it is one of the great lessons such a life as his affords, and it is to be hoped that those who follow in his steps as practical workers will also profit by the example he set in the spirit of his teaching.

In every effort he made for the benefit of society his aims were honest ; his patriotism unimpeachable ; his generosity unbounded ; his sacrifices great and unhesitatingly incurred. He laboured for the people ; he died working for them ; and his last thought was for their welfare.

THE END.

S. Cowan & Co., Printers, Perth.



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